

The Colorado Quarterly

THE UNIVERSITY OF COLORADO

STORIES: John Graves, Hollis Summers

Education and Politics in Red China

Stewart Fraser

The Ballistics of the Whodunit

Jack Ogilvy

Wallace Stevens: Poet in Society

Richard Gollin

The Decadent South

Jack Garlington

The Chemistry of Mental Illness

Edward Podolsky

The Doomed Wilderness

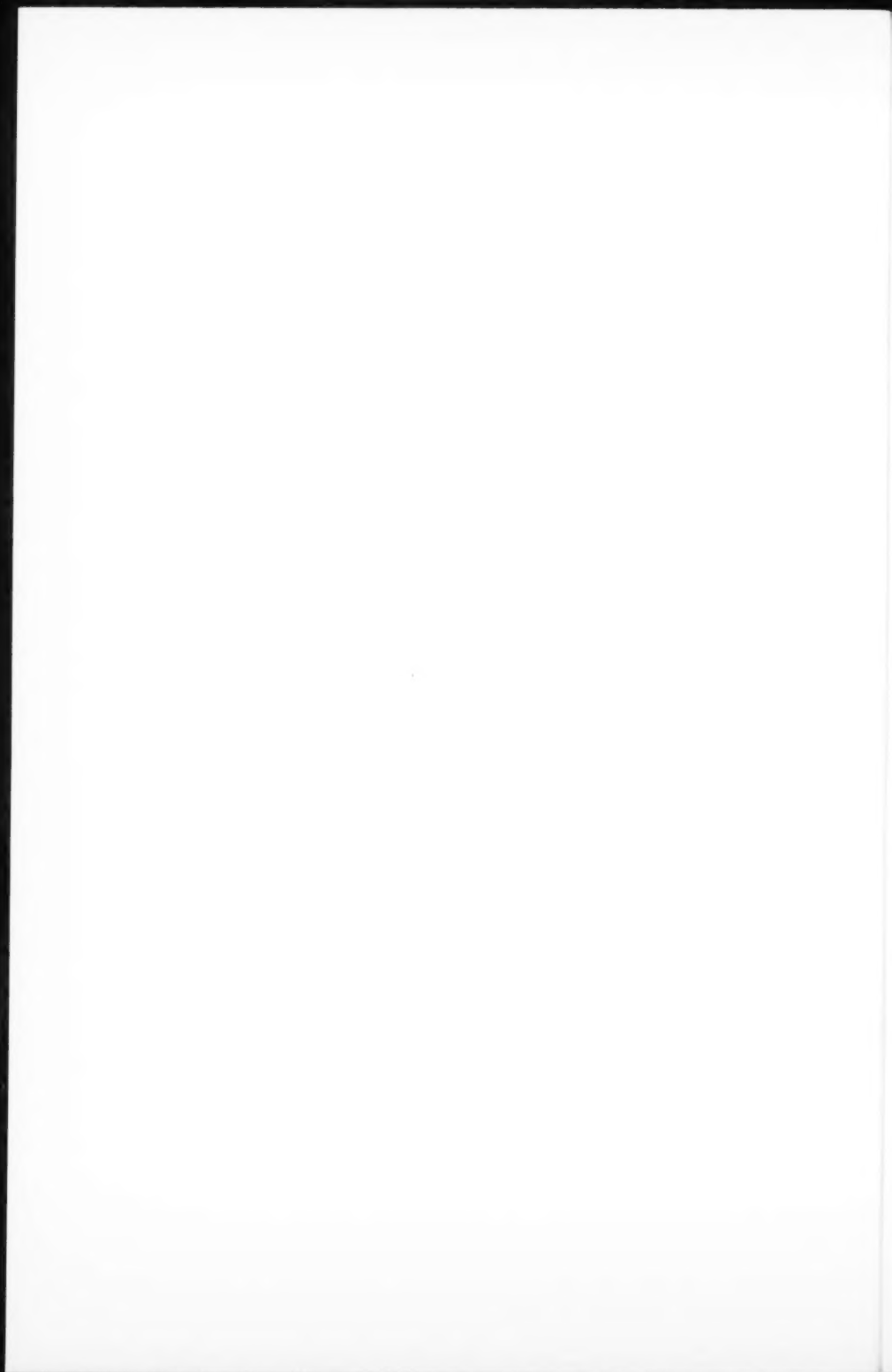
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Education and politics in Red China

STEWART E. FRASER

A slogan, popular in China for the past year or so, has been "The Great Leap Forward." This slogan was adopted, according to Chinese Communist publications, to mark the start of "significant advances in agricultural production, a diversification of industrial manufacturing, a multiplication of governmental efficiency, and widespread developments in the quantity as well as quality of the country's educational facilities." To those unfamiliar with the use of such slogans and the exhortations that accompany them, it would seem strange for such words to have any lasting meaning—especially if we remember that a stream of slogans has been emanating from the Communist regime since its conquest of mainland China in 1949, a decade ago. The slogan, however, in China is meaningful when viewed against the background of Communist Party controls—government edicts and the extensive use of enthusiastically organized "cadres," who throughout the country exhort, threaten, and cajole the populace, explaining the efficacy of the current official line.

During the past ten years there have been several significant party "lines"—or campaigns—for education and those associated with it, either as students or teachers. The "remolding of ideology," the "rectification of erroneous tendencies," and the "halfwork-halfstudy program," were slogans typically in vogue for many of the lines. Some have been specifically aimed at teachers, academics, pseudo-intellectuals, and cultural workers, while others have had a somewhat wider application, even to the point of receiving considerable publicity among overseas Chinese. While no attempt is made here to evaluate the real or lasting worth of the various campaigns, a review of their use and their implications for education will aid us in appreciating the considerable task of "re-educating and remolding" undertaken by the Chinese Communists.

It is difficult to comprehend the problem of reorganizing a

limited educational system, limited in that its objectives and traditions were developed for a social order kept unstable by the military and civil disruptions of the past thirty years. The peak year of schooling under the Kuomintang was probably 1946-47, yet only 40 percent of the school age children were actually in school at that time, and the Communists claim that over 85 percent of the population were illiterate at "liberation." It is of interest to note what a sympathizer of the regime, Shen T. Lan, Christian educator and Y. M. C. A. official, said in 1951 of the pre-Communist school system.

In the past we had a sort of "double track" system whereby primary schools in the countryside offered only four years' study while city primary schools offered six years. The result was disadvantageous to peasant children. Even those fortunate enough to get into a rural primary school were thus pretty well blocked from going on to middle school and college since their educational level was pretty much lower than that of city children who had six years of primary education . . . In addition to the inequalities resulting from this "double track" system the Kuomintang also arranged matters so that only students from relatively well-to-do families managed to get through college. The better off students went from primary school through middle school and then on to college. The "second class" students from poorer families who could not afford the expense of "first-class" education went from middle schools to vocational schools and normal schools instead of to college. Upon graduation they were qualified only for minor jobs such as primary school teachers or clerical positions. Under the K.M.T. "caste" system these normal-vocational school graduates faced insurmountable obstacles if they desired to rise above the position of "second-class scholars."

The Chinese Communists decided to eliminate these inequities by reorganizing the educational system instead of abandoning it, so that it might ultimately serve the majority of the 650 million or so inhabitants of China. They insisted that as many of the population as could be reached must be educated to a national pattern and that many would require re-education, especially those who had had academic training under the auspices of "Old China." Education would have no limitations in the Communist state, since the concept of raising material living standards in China has been directly linked with an increase in the literacy rate. (Literacy rates for China and Japan approximated 35 percent

and 98 percent respectively, and the regime in China plans to have illiteracy reduced to about 5 percent in 1962.)

The necessity for speedily incorporating the formal structures of education and making them function within the "broader sphere of people's education" was obvious, but the attempt to eliminate all inequities soon created new ones. As early as 1951 the Vice-Minister for Education, recognizing the need for selectivity, rigorously defined the role of "people's" education: "It is education to serve the people . . . But for the present, China's educational policy is primarily serving the working class and the peasantry, not the people in general."

For many obvious reasons the development of a literate or semi-literate population educated to accept a single social and political dogma cannot but engender enthusiasm for the regime which has given its people the opportunity to obtain that education. The position in education is moderately stable, and is unlikely to change unless complete freedom of thought and action is eventually permitted and alternate ideas challenging those of the Communist Party are allowed time to be propagated. In actual fact the regime still has the converse problem, namely of stifling old ideas, or revamping them until they can be presented as new teachings for which again a single source, the Party, becomes responsible and takes the credit.

The Chinese Communists have had considerable success in debunking many pedagogic and educational theories inimical to their mode of operation, such as the "absolutism of the professors," the "separation of theoretical studies and practical work," and into these self-created vacuums they have introduced certain novel and unusual ways of doing things. The periodical *People's China* in July, 1953, under the heading "Collective Teaching," had this to say about such developments:

The new curriculum made demands on the teaching staff that only collective and well thought out effort could solve. In the summer of 1952 all the four hundred or more professors and assistants at Tsinghua [one of the leading poly-technical institutes of China] joined in the movement for the thorough reform of teaching methods. Now each course is no longer the responsibility of one professor but of a whole team. This is an adaptation of the Soviet method of "teach-

ing and research groups." Thirty-nine such groups have been formed. Before the new course starts, the members of the group meet and work out an outline, clarify the major theme of the class, discuss the simplest and most effective way of presenting complicated points, and conduct test classes if necessary. The new method has proved far superior to the old. Assistants of the teaching group can more effectively help the students in their class work. And it also ensures that young instructors get the benefit of guidance from the more experienced faculty members.

The fact that the introduction of more up-to-date and "democratic" teaching techniques was accompanied often by the vicious ridiculing, debunking, and persecution of many professors does not obviate the fact that apparently successful substitutions have been made. So much so that it is not surprising that a complete reorganization of the higher institutions of education has been drastically effected during the past few years, leaving the so-called apex of the educational pyramid, that is, the universities, completely unrecognizable, as far as most pre-revolutionary education-alists are concerned. Some five years ago a Nationalist Chinese publication, the *China Handbook*, reported:

All former government universities as well as private and missionary colleges and universities taken over by the Communists have been turned into technological institutes for training technicians to meet the requirements of the Peiping regime's five-year plan. Up to the end of 1954 the Communists had taken over twenty institutions of higher learning, established wholly or partially with foreign subsidies of which seventeen had been receiving funds from the United States.

One might ask how these campaigns or mass movements mentioned are organized and how they affect the efficiency or overall pattern of educational development as laid down by the government? When one talks in terms of sixty million primary school pupils, half a million or more university and college students, or three million workers studying part-time, clarity and definition are undoubtedly blurred, and generalizations tend to lose their effectiveness. Nonetheless, significant features of the regime's activities regarding the intelligentsia at large and the teachers in particular are revealed in the stereotyped organization and execution of the campaigns which by now have become a familiar feature of Chinese political life. The essence of the ideological

mass campaign has been its initial trial and testing for one selected strata in Communist society, then its extensions and reapplication for the other members of the community until the whole nation's attention is brought to bear on the issues raised. The movements are further identified when they are launched by prominent Party leaders in keynote speeches. The course and intensity of the movements furthermore indicate a fairly regular progression through various stages until a climax is reached and one campaign wanes, giving way to a new movement that is rejuvenated by a fresh infusion of Party directives.

One of the earliest movements, which began in 1950-51 and which directly affected the teachers, may be loosely termed the Cheng-Feng Movement (variously translated as "ideological remolding" or "reforming," or even perhaps more crudely as "brain-washing"). The principal purpose of the Cheng-Feng Movement was to introduce the peculiar vocabulary of the Communists to the intellectuals and ensure that they thoroughly understood it. The government went to some lengths in enumerating the principal traits to be cast out by the university teachers and others. A sample of those traits summarized in Communist Chinese jargon would include: (1) feudal mentality indicating the incorrect attitude of intellectuals towards manual labor; (2) egoism rather than collectivism; (3) individualism which was opposed to group consciousness and true socialism; (4) heroism, or the demand for personal glory; (5) hedonism; (6) idealism which contrasted with Marxist materialism; (7) corruption and low morals. The remolding process was particularly well-developed at the college and university level, where not only professors and students, but laborers and groundsmen, were called upon to recast their ideas.

During 1951 and 1952 a spate of illuminating confessions emanated from many of the foremost academies in China. Tsui Shu-Chin, an educationalist, comments in his tract *From Academic Freedom to Brainwashing* that the plight of the intellectual is intolerable, for "when a professor shows what the Communists call progress he is accused of having made simulated progress. When he admits too many mistakes, he is accused of confessing shortcomings in order to conceal real ones, that is dissembling.

And if he becomes too frank at the confession meetings, the Reds censure him for simulating reform. On the other hand, if he refuses to confess, they condemn him as reactionary. No matter what course he takes—right, left, or middle—he is always wrong."

It is not surprising that the confessions had similarly central themes running through them, which indicated the general unsavoriness of many of the academics by dint of their having studied in Europe or America. These themes would include the parasitic role of most prerevolutionary academics, their corruption by the bourgeois liberal ideas prevalent in the Occident, their continuing quest for positions of prestige, their arrogance for the workers and peasants, and so on, all of which were held to result directly from Western ideas in education. The teachers, other than at the colleges and universities, were lightly dealt with in comparison with other intellectual groups, such as the writers and artists, and few ignored the avenues of salvation offered through Marxist precepts.

The year 1952 has been remembered in China as a year of regimentation in all fields of endeavor, with the succeeding year, 1953, now discernible as a year of widespread retrenchment. During 1953 a slogan appeared which portended the commencement of a new campaign which had even more direct relevance for education than those of the previous year. But unlike its predecessor, Chen-Feng, this one was aimed at the students who wished to go on to college or who wished to complete further studies at their schools. Styled as the campaign to promote "Glorious work in the fields and factories, the goal of the young," it attempted to persuade the students that a life of dignified labor was superior and more rewarding than remaining in the comparative comfort of the school surroundings.

Apart from the real consideration as to whether farm or form was superior, the government was faced with a major financial problem, namely paying for the Korean War, and the yardstick in education was ostensibly altered in official circles to read "quality not quantity." Many students found themselves directed away from their classes, and a large proportion even found themselves in the remoter areas of China where they had "volunteered" for a spell of "glorious productive labor" with other "new colonizers."

During 1953 to 1955 the regime concentrated on reorganizing many of its administrative organs and planning the five-year programs which soon came to fashion. Spectacular political developments in either schools or colleges were not so apparent until 1956 when a "bombshell" of the first magnitude was revealed. In actual fact it was a double-header with one campaign destined to "rectify abuses at the governmental level" and the other to aid the "blooming and contending in intellectual circles." Though the two campaigns were not of equal interest to the teachers and students in spite of their links, it was the latter development which caused such a furor amongst the intelligentsia and all those who had pretensions to that title.

Variously known as the "hundred flowers or thousand contending schools," as well as by other titles, the launching of the initial campaign was designed to "restrictively invigorate" the cultural workers of China and prevent intellectual stagnation, already said to be a feature of Communist societies elsewhere. Lee Teng Yi, who at the time held the position of Propaganda Chief of the Central Committee of the Party, delivered a lengthy keynote speech addressed to the intellectuals, stating,

The blooming and contending of ideas within intellectual circles was permitted. For the artists and writers let a hundred flowers bloom; for the savants let a hundred schools compete . . . More than two thousand years ago many schools of thought competed among themselves for supremacy. It was the Golden Age in the intellectual development of China. History has shown that when independent thought and free discussion are not encouraged, academic life stagnates.

Unfortunately, the regime had not counted on the snowballing effect the new line would have on many students. The adverse results of "many contending schools" had become more than apparent publicly before the Communist Party realized that it had fathered a campaign, the legitimacy of which was now in grave doubt. Many intellectual circles previously dormant or conformist and many students previously passive and inhibited added their contributions to the ever-growing number of contending groups. This was manifested by the change in tone noted in the periodical literature and letters to the various daily newspapers.

This flood of liberality ultimately alarmed the authorities at

Peking, and checks were introduced in the "campaign" so that the "scholars, artists, and thinkers" would be dampened. Mao Tse-Tung in a speech to the Supreme Council of State in February, 1957, devoted a whole passage to the "hundred flowers" development and indicated that limits were to be placed on the boundaries of criticism. Mao explained that Marxism was open to criticism, which the "hundred flowers" had offered to many intellectuals, but the format to be followed allowed for refutation of criticism and likewise required opportunity for persuasion to follow discussion. A somewhat less subtle way of stating the position would have been to indicate that criticism was at an end and henceforth persuasion was to become dominant, without the opportunity for counter criticism. In the end, as the Communists themselves indicated, "many weeds which had sprung up with the blooming flowers were identified, isolated, and in time destroyed."

In spite of the regime's ultimate reaction, the overflow of exuberant uninhibited criticism manifest in the top literary and cultural circles did percolate significantly through the universities and schools. And the opportunity was enthusiastically taken up by many students to criticize the regime, their teachers, and certainly the extravagances of many young Communists, who in stultifying student activities had forced student bodies into molds of excessive conformity.

The force and vigor with which the regime ultimately matched the exuberance of the students and academics was not surprising. The whole mode of controlled criticism and orderly development of the Communist state had been challenged with some success, and for a period of nearly a year further "weeding out and consolidation" took place before a new ideological campaign was attempted.

Thus it was to be expected that when a new "line offensive" was initiated it would be of massive size and would seek to dwarf all the past endeavors of the Party theoreticians and organizing cadres. The latest line of 1958-1959 has by most accounts sought to eclipse all previous movements whether punitive, exploratory, or developmental. The design for education which the new slogan, "The Great Leap Forward," holds includes among other things a startling increase in tertiary school facilities. Efforts are being

made to accommodate between 1956-1960 twice the number of students who wish to go on with their studies after completing secondary school or who "graduate from farms and factories." An earlier warning that too large a percentage of students were tainted with "bourgeois backgrounds" had been well taken, and in 1959 specific provisions for a greater intake of "peasant worker background" students had been made by the Ministry of Higher Education.

As part of the "Great Leap Forward," students are to reorientate their study techniques so that a new emphasis can be placed on "combining education with productive labor." It is true that practical work and periods of "happy but hard" manual labor had already been the lot of students from time to time under the Peking Government. This was based clearly on Chinese Communist tenets which stipulated the necessity for students, teachers, and intellectuals to identify themselves entirely with the manual workers. Undoubtedly this belief in relating manual work and academic studies has been influenced at periods by the practical necessity of pushing surplus students out to the country into physically productive occupations, dogma or no dogma.

In fact in 1957 when nearly a million government cadres, functionaries, intellectuals, and "over bloomed flowers" were transferred to the country to "rectify their mistakes," some interesting stories circulated in Peking. New China News Agency in November of that year reported that the "transferred intellectuals originally could not bear the smell of manure. Since they participated in agricultural production they have been extremely eager to carry manure. Some of them walk with containers in their hands and pick up manure wherever it is found. Some do nothing else but pick up manure. Many transferred cadres not only labor with the people but live with them. They have become intimate as if they were members of the same family." Accounts from Peking indicate that some intellectuals were so enamored and whileheartedly immersed in their new stations that they behaved most boorishly when they returned to the capital. They shocked their colleagues by continuing to sport their peasant clothes, speaking crudely just as their peasant friends did, and what was worse smelled rustically as only genuine peasants could!

An interesting, though perhaps insufficient, explanation is given by the regime for the necessity of labor and study programs which have become a prominent feature of secondary and college education. The *Kuang Ming Jih Pao*, a widely distributed daily, stated on February 11, 1958,

Promotion of part-time work and study will lighten the duty of the students' families to pay their tuition and living expenses thus affording more workers' and peasants' children the opportunity of entering schools When the state is concentrating its capital on developing industrial and agricultural production and when the number of students increases every year along with the increasing developments of educational enterprises, we must set a definite limit to financial aid given to the students. This will have to rely on the students to do part-time work while they are studying so as to make up for the deficiency of State aid.

The clarification of the role of education and its integration in the general plan for combining work and labor is further revealed in a State Council directive of September, 1958. This is one of more recent major pronouncements on education, and its importance for the "Great Leap Forward" can be gauged from the new relationship to be developed between school and factory and eventually between commune and university. The mass campaign of the "Great Leap Forward" has its ideological counterpart and import for education located in this document.

The Party line in educational work seems to make education serve the proletariat politically, and unite education with productive labor. In order to implement this line, educational work must be led by the Party. Marxist-Leninist political and ideological indoctrination must be carried out in all schools to indoctrinate the teachers and students with the class viewpoint of the working class, the mass viewpoint, the labor viewpoint, or the viewpoint calling for the integration of mental labor with physical labor and the dialectical materialistic viewpoint. The future direction is for schools to run factories and farms, and for factories and agricultural co-operatives to establish schools We will spend about fifteen years to universalize higher education. After that another fifteen years or so will be spent to enhance the work.

There is no doubting the unmistakably long-term, though confident approach that is being made to integrate education and

make it serve the demands and requirements of the Party. The State Council directive goes on to indicate that the "new man" of all-round development in Chinese Communist society is "one who has both political consciousness and culture and is capable of taking up both mental and physical labor."

Translated into less prosaic and more practical terms this means that all institutions of higher education (and for that matter the bulk of senior secondary schools) are destined to establish ancillary factories and workshops. By the end of 1959 over seven thousand such establishments had been founded by universities and colleges. In an endeavor to reduce cost by some form of productivity and give valuable practical experience to students, a veritable host of workshops associated with high schools are reported to have sprung up. These school factories have been producing products ranging from minor farm implements to intricate laboratory equipment. Many have set up crude furnaces to produce limited quantities of pig iron for the iron and steel centers of North China.

Any comment on this unusual development in education would necessitate caution as to the size, extent, and actual productivity of these factory units, as described in the Chinese Communist press. But in many fields of endeavor there has been a tendency in China during the past few years to publish quantitative figures rather than mere percentages. If one accepts the long-term plans for industrialization as laid down by the regime, it is more than feasible that the large number of school workshops said to have been established are actually in operation. It is even more feasible to expect that within the next five years most educational institutes at the secondary and college level will have considerable practical work facilities at their disposal.

These developments are not merely the result of the technological advances, the power conflicts, or the cosmic explorations that have recently occurred in the United States and Russia. In the main they arise out of the single-minded, nation-wide goal of insuring that China becomes an industrial power of major consequence, thereby increasing the material benefits available to the Chinese people, in the shortest time possible.

A start has been made and its focus dogmatically fixed in the

educational system upon which Red China's prosperity is said to be based. The practical approach and the compulsive nature of the regime's educational policy necessitate the schools taking on the functions of factories and workshops in developing their own "educational systems." The ultimate integration of the two would seem inevitable, and in the field of comparative education it does suggest an experiment on a vast and awesome scale, which is all the more significant because of the State's resources placed at its disposal. The teacher may become a well oiled foreman whose function it is to keep the flow of mental products and ideas balanced by an equal flow of material products fabricated by the school-cum-factory.

While it would be an understatement to say that the scheme and its ramifications need sympathetic consideration from educationalists outside China, it would be more pertinent to inquire as to the transmutations which will take place in Chinese society and the consequences of the installation of these somewhat unique, if not disturbing, educational values, the counterpart of which has not been seen outside Asia and which certainly cause bewilderment and envy among many educationalists in Southeast Asia.

Five poems

WILLIAM STAFFORD

BY THE OLD DEER TRAIL

Into the forest under the bough,
and under the bough again,
feet by moss, lost—long lost—
a path veers toward our time,

Coming to meet what moss retrieves
after the deer are gone,
after the little deer bunch their feet
and launch off into time.

Looking hard at the level moss,
the sun burns over the line
deer once made for the sun to burn
after their time, our time.

THE PETERS FAMILY

At the end of their ragged field
a new field began:
miles told the sunset that Kansas
would hardly ever end,
and that beyond the Cimarron crossing
and after the row-crop land
a lake would surprise the country
and sag with a million birds.

You couldn't analyze those people—
a no-pattern had happened to them:
their field opened and opened,
level, and more, then forever,
never crossed. Their world went everywhere.

LATE THINKER

Remembering mountain farms
that gleam far for lost men,
he knows by sympathy
tonight by the steady stove,
questioning one grain at a time,
wandering like a dune,
easy with the wind—
that some kind of organization
is the right way to live.

A secret friend of those lands
where certain plants hide in the woods,
he stands with them. In the fern
he shoulders pack. In the dark
he joins the star-striding men
who crossed the continent
following, toward the low sky,
ocean-generous clouds
to the firred mountains of Oregon.

Or maybe—tie, rail, spike—
to hay towns beyond Salt Lake:
store fronts winds have tasted,
paint that summers tested—
he questions those pale towns,
turns to those haggard lands.
Where are the wrongs men have done?
He holds out calloused hands
toward that landscape of justice.

He counts each daily meeting,
the stare of its blind meaning,
and maintains an autumn allegiance,
but what can he lean toward?
Remembering the wild places, bitter,
where pale fields meet winter,
he searches for some right song
that could catch and then shake the world,
any night by the steady stove.

UNIVERSE IS ONE PLACE

Crisis they call it?—when
when the gentle wheat leans at the combine and
and the farm girl brings cool jugs wrapped in burlap
slapping at her legs?

We think—drinking cold water
water looking at the sky—
Sky is home, universe is one place.
Crisis? City folks make

Make such a stir.
Farm girl away through the wheat.

I WAS IN THE CITY ALL DAY

Into the desert, trading people for horses,
the leader rode toward a responsible act:
the having one person at the last campfire,
telling just the next thing to that one person,
with all around only the waiting night waiting,
in the shadows the horses eating wild hay—
and then the last word without distraction,
one meaning like a bird slipping out into the dark.

REVERSE ON THE COAST RANGE

By EARLE BIRNEY

Confidently in the higher valleys
the hemlocks massed their heavy reserves
shanking themselves with furze over the years
like mammoths hairy aga'inst the snow

Veteran battalions of Alpine fir
defiled up the ancient battleslopes
cool and spiked as flint arrowheads
while silently on the ridges
the pines did guard duty
lodgepole pines straight and cold as gunbarrels

'Then suddenly one March—
when explosions of spruce were bursting at last
at the foot of the cliffs, and the larch
picked of their yellow flesh by the winter's campaign
knelt pale in the wind that machinegunned down from the peak—
with a crack and the roar of a thousand howitzers
out from the mountain's writhing camouflage
boomed the full broadside of the enemy
the flooding and fanning avalanche

bombing from the ledges the juniper outposts
shredding them down through bursting snow
down with uptorn larch and the levelled firs
to drown all deep with the hemlocks
in relentless rock and ice
through the valley's vast obliteration

Far away the dogwood heard and clutching
their waxen vanities
fled down the seaslopes
to where a madrona tanned its lazy limbs
in the sun and oblivious maples
plaited within their quiet boles
a million golden tassels for the spring

The ballistics of the whodunit

J. D. A. OGILVY

So far as I know, statisticians have not yet supplied us with accurate figures on the number of gun bugs in the United States. The pure-quill gun bug, who exists merely to shoot, reload cartridges, and experiment with firearms, is probably even rarer than the authentic fishing bum, who exists throughout the season on the banks of streams and lakes without visible means of support. But if we classify as gun bugs all those with some interest in firearms and a fair working knowledge of their operation, there must be millions of them.

Despite their preoccupation with the tools of destruction, gun bugs as a group are a surprisingly inoffensive species; and I am unable to understand the heedless cruelty with which they are treated by so many writers of fiction—particularly of detective stories. After all, if one is ignorant of firearms, he can always dispose of the victim by stabbing, suffocation, a blunt instrument, or a cup of cold cyanide.

It is not, for example, necessary to have a character about to hit another over the head with a pistol reverse the gun and hold it like a tack hammer. Yet this is done not only in whodunits but also in comic strips, to the exquisite anguish of the gun bug and of anyone else who is willing to apply the laws of physics and of common sense to the proceeding.

Having had a careful Victorian training in the social niceties, at about the time I was taught that when a gentlemen walked with a lady he walked on the outside of the sidewalk, I was also informed by my father, who had had some small personal experience in these matters and who had been coached by experts, that if one had occasion to use a chair in a fight he should not try to swing it like a club but should pick it up by the back and ram the legs at his vis-à-vis. Similarly, if one had occasion to hit someone over the head with a pistol, the thing to do was to hold the weapon normally, raise it, and bring the barrel down smartly on his

opponent's skull. If one wished his victim in a reasonably good state of preservation, it was advisable to lay the barrel across the thick part, or top, of the skull, since a sideswipe might cave in the thin bone of the temple and permanently ruin the specimen.

It is the neglect of these little social graces in the rearing of the young that has brought us to our present unhappy pass. But even if we ignore the appalling *gaucherie* of holding the gun like a tomahawk, we should remember the practical consequences. In the first place, if one wishes to stun a person, one should hit him with the heavy end of whatever tool he employs for the purpose. The heavy end of a revolver, particularly of the long-barreled Western models, is the barrel. A short-barreled revolver or an automatic is a poor substitute for a club, but I have been told one can achieve satisfactory results simply by bringing his closed fist with the butt of the gun in it down on an opponent's head. Another desideratum in such a procedure is a minimum of damage to the tool employed. The weak spot in most guns is the juncture of the stock and the breech, and holding the gun by the barrel puts a maximum of strain on this spot.

Finally, by holding the gun by the barrel, one points the business end, as the old-timers called it, directly at himself and presents the handle and the trigger to his opponent. Even if his opponent is so unsuspecting or so obliging as to ignore this opportunity, a good many makes of guns will go off without pulling the trigger if one jars them hard enough. What with one thing and another, reversing one's gun in this fashion is likely to result in scattering his tripe over a considerable area.

No wonder I was warned that such a silly performance would make me at best a social outcast and at worst a corpse; but I have yet to see one of the chumps who attempt this feat in fiction get what he so richly deserves.

With practice, one can harden himself to the weapon which is a revolver in one chapter and an automatic in the next, though any reasonably bright child of six should be able to grasp the distinction. The cartridges in a revolver are placed in holes bored in a metal cylinder at the rear of the barrel. Each time the trigger is pulled, the cylinder revolves so that a fresh cartridge is brought in line with the barrel and under the firing pin. The empty shells

remain in the cylinder until the revolver is reloaded. The butt of an automatic is hollow and holds a magazine or "clip" with a spring in the bottom to push the cartridges up, and a slight pinching in at the top so that the cartridges cannot come out straight up, but must be pushed out from the rear. The breech block has a strong spring which pushes it forward against the base of the barrel. When a clip is placed in the butt and the breech block pulled back and then released, it pushes the top cartridge in the clip forward into the barrel. When the gun is fired, the breech block is driven back by the explosion and the empty cartridge is withdrawn by a little spring hook in the block that has caught the rim of the shell. On its way back, the empty cartridge hits a small lug which flips it loose from the hook and ejects it, usually over the right shoulder of the person firing the gun. (This, of course, is the theory. In practice, automatics frequently jam.)

So long as the difference between the types of weapons makes no real difference to the story, one might excuse the author for confusing them; but frequently it makes an important difference. For example, the great detective picks up an *automatic* and without more ado says, "This gun has been fired twice." The whole plot of the story hinges upon this deduction. But what the reader never discovers is how the great detective knew.

If the gun had been a revolver, there would have been two fired cartridges in the cylinder, but an automatic throws away the empties. One might—though we are not told that the great detective did—count the cartridges remaining in the gun and subtract them from the number in a full clip, but he would still be guessing. The clip need not have been full in the first place. On the other hand, a good many clips can be forced to take one more cartridge than their normal load. Besides, many people give themselves an extra shot by "hand feeding" an automatic. That is, they pull back the breech block, slip a cartridge directly into the barrel, let the block snap forward, and then slip a loaded clip into the butt. Consequently, about the only way to be sure how often an automatic has been fired is to count the holes in the corpse and his surroundings or to make sure that one has found all the empty shells that the gun has ejected—no mean feat in most places.

Another author who is apparently unaware of the hand-feeding trick has his detective take an automatic away from a suspect and take out the clip. Seeing that the clip is full, he pockets it and returns the gun to the suspect without checking for the cartridge which a reasonably suspicious person might expect to find lurking in the barrel. In real life, there would have been one, and the suspect would have let the great detective have the bullet in the neighborhood of the third vest button. But nothing so reasonable ever occurs in this sort of detective story. The great detective survives to perpetrate an even more implausible bit of nonsense.

In this particular bit of fantasy, he shoots another suspect in the legs with a twelve-gauge shotgun at very short range, since they are both in the same room. While the suspect writhes on the floor in agony, the detective assures him that he is not seriously injured because the gun contained only bird shot and the suspect's boots had stopped it. After reading that, I hung an old shoe over the top of a fence-post and shot it at twelve feet with a twelve-gauge shotgun loaded with bird shot. The charge tore a hole clear through the shoe and ripped the top off the fence post into the bargain. At that range the whole ounce and a quarter of shot was traveling in an almost solid mass.

This is not the only interesting trick that can be played with a shotgun if one is willing to abrogate the laws of physics. One author bumps off dear old grandpa in the following ingenious manner: While grandpa is dozing in the sun porch, the villain sneaks in and lays a shotgun across a table so that it points at grandpa's midriff. Then he places a cartridge in the gun and departs, leaving the breech open. A ray of sun through the glass falls on the cap of the cartridge. (The glass appears to be ordinary glass, not a lens.) All this is bad enough, but there is worse to come. As the sun gradually warms it, the cap hisses gently, like the fuse of a firecracker, I suppose. Now if there is one quality for which fulminate of mercury and other materials used in cartridge caps are noted, it is their habit of going off "all to once," like the deacon's gunpowder in *David Harum*. They are chosen for that particular quality.

After so monumental a howler as this, one is hardly likely to

boggle at a final implausibility. After hissing gently for a spell, the cartridge explodes and blasts as big a hole in grandpa as the bird shot should have made in the suspect with the boots on. But would it? The shot weighed about ten times as much as the cartridge that held it. Consequently, with no breech block to check it, the cartridge should have shot out of the breech at a respectable velocity, while the shot proceeded slowly down the barrel, supposing the friction of the wad ahead of it did not stop it altogether. If projectiles did not behave in this way, a gun would do as much damage to the hunter as the much lighter bullet does to the bear.

There is just an outside chance—a very slim one—that the force of the explosion would have pressed the walls of the cartridge against the chamber hard enough to hold the cartridge in place, but the more I contemplate the idea, the less likely it seems. Even if it had, the bottom of the cartridge would probably have blown out before enough pressure was built up to drive the shot into grandpa.

Compared to physics of this sort, the pronouncements of an African witch doctor would appear the austere dicta of pure science.

Another bit of black magic in the detective story is the telescope sight. In the most extreme example I have encountered, the villain picks up what is described as a high-powered rifle and, in a driving snow storm as dusk settles down, drops his man at half a mile. Let's see you beat that, Buck Rogers. An expert, shooting a gun he had sighted in himself, might just manage to hit a man at half a mile if he could see him under the conditions described. Possibly the gun was equipped with radar.

Just to destroy the last vestiges of plausibility, we discover later that the gun is a 25-20, which only a very polite person would call high-powered. Many consider the load a little heavy for squirrels but a little light for woodchucks. On top of that, the villain had never fired this particular gun before and had no way of knowing whether the sight was set for fifty or two hundred yards. Under these circumstances, his chances of hitting a man at that range, supposing that his radar telescope allowed him to see the target

at all, would be on the slim side—about a million to one, to be generous.

It is not as if avoidance of these errors involved elaborate study of difficult material. There are books and magazines devoted to the subject. There are encyclopedias. Even dictionaries often carry pictures of various types of weapons. For the detective story writer who cannot read or write and simply dictates his yarns to a secretary, there are the gun bugs themselves, only too willing to discuss their hobby with anyone who will listen. Yet this inhuman persecution goes on.

As I have said the typical gun bug is surprisingly meek and patient, but even the mildest of men can be tried too far. Unless writers of detective stories mend their ways, it would not surprise me to hear that some famous (or at least prolific) author in this field had been executed—or, as the base vulgar might say, assassinated. The manner of his taking off will undoubtedly be one which would baffle his great detective. (These gentlemen baffle about as easily as anyone I have ever met.) It may even cause the ballistics experts to scratch their heads a little. For example, he may be cut down by a charge of bird shot at a hundred and fifty yards (a range at which bird shot is not ordinarily lethal). This trick would involve a quaint device known as a wire cartridge, or some variant thereof. Or perhaps he may be shot with a bullet which bears no traces of the rifling through which it was fired.

Should this day come, I shall know that some gun bug has had more than he can take. Whodunit writers, beware! It may be later than you think.

ELEGY:
BAREFOOT BOY

By JUDSON JEROME

Lead soldiers once were lead, oh barefoot boy:
you sympathized with Ethiopians,
and Germans (in your mind confused with germs)
toppled in trenches in your garden wars.
But years, Spitfires and Messerschmitts made your
dirt digging and your tanks all obsolete.
Dive-bombers dived to noises in your throat.
They rationed shoes right off your grateful feet.

A lock of hair pulled down, a comb upon
your lip, you made Sieg Heils into the mirror,
saved grease and hangers, paper, fingered a V
and sang the notes Beethoven wrote to show
support of Churchill and the Allied Powers.
Air Wardens were your generals when, unwary,
you smiled into a birthday and were taken,
nor wondered if the trip were necessary.

Children will play you, with your quaint devices:
your GI boots and nylon parachutes.
Though jets outdate you, children will remember
some of the names of some of your enemies;
and though the name of Iwo or of Anzio
become a crossword, death become a toy,
and beaches wash themselves of leaden soldiers,
children will play you hard, oh barefoot boy.

Four poems

REEVE SPENCER KELLEY

THE THINGS ONE COMES UPON IN THE SOUTHWEST!

They were among the rocks shooting
At one another; actors
Loading and re-loading their pistols
With blank cartridges, the hero
Creeping up a hidden path
To a vantage point along a ledge.

He almost made it, too, except
His elbow brushed a cactus on the way.
Then it was . . . hold the cameras! Hold the cameras!
As he stumbled down the trail
Clutching his sleeve, a woman,
From a purple trailer, climbing toward him
With a first aid kit, the others,
Dangling their guns,
Gathering in a sympathetic circle
Around their hero's angry cries.

Only two dead men remained on the slope,
Holding their places but turning
On their sides to light cigarets;
The pale blue smoke of which
Rose mold-like through the azure air:
Death waiting, thus, until life
Had consumed its grievous pain.

THE LANCER

Though he has stripped the flesh from war,
From poetry, from hate, and more,

This racking of old Eliot up,
The proffering of the bitter cup,

Seems, like the west wind, brash, to me,
I think he should have offered tea—

Young, Jewish lancer, bright, but grim,
Who, jousting, caved the straw men in,

Who gave us minutes, large as birds,
Buicks, flies, and dirty words—

For I still favor afternoons
Of measured sweet and coffee spoons,

The cornets that cracked my heart
More poignant than the lancer's art.

100th COMMANDMENT

I know forty-six places to die
And thirty-six places to eat,
I know ninety-nine places to worship,
But nowhere to pray on the street:

Where faith would be more than amusing,
Where love would be slightly insane;
Kneel, in suave beauty, on Sundays,
But never take business in vain.

BEHIND THE HOUSE A STAR

Behind the adobe house, a crouching car,
Behind the crouching car, a broken wagon,
Behind the broken wagon, a crumbling cave
Of arrowheads and, once, a skull
That some one took to Harvard to define.

Civilization

A strip of asphalt, thin as ice,
An the anthropomorphism of three jets
Attributing their form to god.

So, cave to wheel, to wheel to sky

And, again, that overwhelming sense
Of both being and being in the presence
Of a creature who, prehensile hands
 upon his instruments,
Holds himself between the morning
And the sun.

Who,

Tugging at his bootstraps
To defeat the tangled earth,
Would attain the jungle sky,
To pit against the lamp-white stars
The darings of the moth.

The Aztec dog

JOHN GRAVES

When, on sandal-shuffling feet, the young Indian maid had taken away the last plates, the two of them sat at the table smoking. The boy was reading a book, as he had been doing throughout the meal. The old man's bored forefinger made squares and triangles of crumbs of tobacco. The dining room was wide, floored and wainscoted with patterned green tiles, its three windows mullion-paned, but it had no ceiling and the roof that showed dimly above roughmilled rafters was of corrugated steel. Of furniture it held only the heavy table and the unmatched chairs in which they sat. In a corner, where the old man had tossed it before dinner, lay a quilt.

He had a gray mustache, cold dark eyes, and the face of a falcon, and wore a gray short riding-jacket and a white shirt buttoned at the throat without a tie. He said distantly, "Would you want a game of checkers?"

The boy raised book-focused blue eyes. It was poetry, the old man knew. He had glanced through the book where it lay on a chair that afternoon and had seen that it was poetry, in English. Not even good poetry, as far as he considered himself qualified to judge...

The boy said in formula, "No. No, thanks."

He had been living at the hacienda for six weeks and had learned nearly all of his Spanish, which was good enough, in that time. It was one of the reasons given for his being there, to learn Spanish. When his father came again he would perhaps notice its excellence, not that the old man, whose name was Fernando Iturriaga, cared greatly.

Nor did he care about the checkers; the invitation was a nightly convention. At the beginning of the six weeks while feeling each other's temper they had played every evening. Later less, and later still not at all. But he went through the ritual of the invitation each night because irony and formality made living with the boy

possible. He would have enjoyed carrying the formality to the point of coffee and cigarettes in the *salón de estar*, but that was not feasible because the *salón*, like the rest of the house except the dining room and two bedrooms and a kitchen, was without even a steel roof above it. Raw edges of mortared masonry left white marks on your clothing if you walked much about the unfinished parts of the house, though they had been unfinished for eighteen years. The porch lacked railings, and outside the back door gaped a staired, never-covered cellar-entrance into which a hog had once fallen to break three of its four legs. Much pork, that had been.

Rats danced sometimes in the moonlight on the tiles of the *salón de estar*. Fernando Iturriaga had seen them. It had seemed well.

The boy coughed and lit another cigarette. The old man went to the window and swung it open and looked out in the late dusk at his flower garden beneath old aguacates. Pallid small roses speckled the gloom and he smelled them. From a hole in the great wall beyond the garden, water he could not see trickled audibly. He was reassured by the roses and the sound of the water running from a wall his people had built two hundred years before and by the knowledge that among the roots of the aguacates violets bloomed as they had since his mother's time.

For a wife his father had gone to Spain—to Asturias—and she had brought the gardening with her to the moist valley where the hacienda spread, big in those days. His father's family had been hard, harsh, rawhide people, precipitate in pleasure and in work, and it was only now, after nearly seventy years of living, that Fernando Iturriaga could feel a little of his mother in himself.

Having made the bet with himself he forgot to time it, but he thought the guess had been good. When the boy came back with the blue-glass liter bottle of *aguardiente* it was his turn to be ironic. He sat it on the table and asked Fernando Iturriaga if he wanted a drink.

As always, the old man refused. He drank, sometimes too much, but not with the boy. He valued the formality too highly.

The boy's father planned, or said he planned, to make the haci-

enda into a guest ranch. Fernando Iturriaga believed by now that the boy, who was there because he had slapped a professor, or had fecundated a girl, or something of that sort, was the only guest that particular guest ranch was ever likely to have.

Not that he wanted more . . .

Watching the boy pour yellowish liquor into a glass, he said, "You rode into the upper valley today?"

"Yes."

The boy took a piece of bread and soaked it in the liquor. Fernando Iturriaga heard a quick tapping of claws on the tiles.

"You shouldn't," he said. "I've told you, with the elections coming on. You went into the cantina?"

"I do every day," the boy said. "Vidal! Look, Vidal!"

"You shouldn't," the old man repeated, risking a loss of formality in the irritation that cooled his belly when he thought of the boy speaking with the peasants of the upper valley in a brushwood bar, about Fernando Iturriaga.

The boy said indifferently, "Oh, it's all right. I get along with them."

The dog barked, dancing on quick white feet. It was tiny, brindle above and white below, with fragile legs and shadings of black about its muzzle and eyes. Before the American boy had come, the dog had never entered the house, though Fernando Iturriaga had played with it on the veranda in the afternoon, quietly, and had dropped bits of tortilla and meat to it out of his dining-room window when it begged from the garden. It was two years old and he had named it, whimsically, Vidal, because in his country's capital there was a street called that where the French mistress of a friend of his had once lived. It was of the ancient breed of alert Mexican mongrels from which the Aztecs had bred their even tinier bald dogs, and was symptomatic of a gentleness that had troubled him now for five or six years.

He had never seen gentleness as desirable, except in women. Insufficiently gentle, his own wife had left him eighteen years before, taking his sons, when the house was half-rebuilt and the money had run out and she had found out about his relations with the cook they had had then.

He conceded now that there had been enough for her to be

ungentle about. But he had several grandchildren whom he had never seen.

"Stand up," the boy said.

Fernando Iturriaga watched as the dog skipped on two legs before the boy. It snatched the piece of liquor-wetted bread from the air when he dropped it, gulping without chewing.

"Salud," the boy said sipping from his glass and grinning. "Salud, Vidal."

The old man said stubbornly, "They're troublesome people. Sooner or later you'll meet one of them drunk."

"One?" the boy said and laughed, glancing at him. "The half of them always are. They let me shoot a pistol at a cactus today."

"Sons of whores!" Fernando Iturriaga said forcibly through clamped teeth.

And wished that he had not, since it only meant that the boy had once more broken through the formality. Iturriaga sat for a moment swallowing anger like spittle, then went to his room to change his slippers back to half-boots and to shave. When he passed through the dining room twenty minutes later the dog was drunk. It had no capacity for the liquor. Neither had the boy, who crouched laughing on the floor, teasing it. It ran in short circles about him, yapping and dashing to tear at the flickering hands with its teeth.

Fernando Iturriaga thought that it was much like the rats' dance in the drawing room.

In the moonwashed court before the house a fresh horse stood saddled, as it did every night whether or not he wanted to use it. From the great wall's shadow two Indians' cigarettes pulsed; they murmured inarticulate courtesies and he grunted back in the same spirit. Leading the horse through the gate, he mounted in the road by the river. It shied, bouncing under him, a gray he had not ridden for several days. As he reined it into darkness under the cottonwoods lined along the little river, he was conscious of the valley's wide concavity to either side, more conscious than he had usually been when the valley had belonged to him. He had been there only occasionally during most of that time.

At its mouth, below the town toward which he rode, the earth fell away two thousand feet to malarial jungle, where the river

ran turbidly wide to the sea. On clear days, from the flat top of a granary at the hacienda, the old man had often seen the shimmer of sun on salt water a hundred kilometers to the east.

Inland, the valley rose and flattened into a grassy bowl beneath the high peaks. His family's cattle had grazed there for seven generations, but now it was checkered into irrigated holdings of Indian agrarians. In the days of the change he had killed one of them. That had cost him a good part of the money he had had left, and they had nearly killed him later, skipping a bullet off his ribs as he passed a canebrake, six months before his wife had left him.

In the mornings the miserable dog had hangovers. Like a Christian, with thirst and groaning, and when you rolled back the thin black lids, the balls of the eyes were laced with blood.

He thought the gringos had begun to spawn rare ones, finally. Maybe they always had, but before, except for their nervous accessible women in the capital and the resorts, they had sent usually the meaty big ones like the boy's father, who knew cattle or oil or cotton or some other one thing completely and whom Fernando Iturriaga had always disliked a little because they profited from change and he did not.

But without obsession. Without what he thought of as the national obsession. He rode along on the pleasantly tense gray gelding toward the town where he would clatter dominoes and sip habanero with a drugstore owner and a grain-dealer and a fat incompetent doctor who—though, with less reason than he, they shared his political bitterness—were not really friends of his. The kind of people he had chosen for friends lived in France, or the capital, or New York. Or were dead. He had not chosen well; he recognized that. Even the survivors had comfortably forgotten him when he had left that world.

But he had lived for five years in Paris and had known how to eat and drink and had bayed after actresses and gringas and such quarry, as a man of his background had been expected to do, and had spoken good English and French.

The gringo boy and his father did not know about all that, not even about the English, which he had never spoken with them. They thought of him as decayed indigenous gentry left over from feudalism.

That kind of feudalism had not existed since Iturbide, or before, but the old man granted that he was at least, sufficiently decayed.

Riding, he thought without obsession about the gringo boy, and the dog, and gringos, and actresses with generals in long touring cars riding out to bull ranches, and how there ought to be green peace in the valley when, finally, you wanted peace.

Drink made the boy dizzy. He did not especially like it; it was a thing to rasp the old man's feelings with, like speaking of the cantina in the upper valley.

His name was John Anders and he was at the ranch because he had driven a pink unmuffled sports car into a culvert-rail near Amarillo, on his way to Hollywood with money from a considerable check forged in his father's name.

He had not known why Hollywood. An unpleasant hitchhiker with a ducktail haircut, sitting beside him, had died in the crash, but the boy had waked up on his back among prickly pears with a state patrolman bending cold-eyed over him and nothing at all broken in his slight body.

"No," he said to the dog sternly. "You've had enough."

He put down the book. It was Dylan Thomas; the boy's mother had had two nervous short stories published when young and all his life, in lieu of comprehension, had besieged him with literature. Some taste for it had stuck. He was nineteen, with one expulsion from college behind him and another school to try in the autumn, four months ahead now, and for two or three years poetry and kindred queerness had been serving him for armor in prep schools and around country-club swimming pools, where he did not fit well. Queernesses and a willingness to fight. . .

His mother had wept emptily in her dove-gray bedroom and he had watched her, not for the first time or the fiftieth, and afterward had listened to his father's bellowing querulity in the same mood and had ridden with him on the peremptory trip down into Mexico, not-listening all the way. He had learned to do that before he had been twelve.

When he got up from the table he found that the raw aguar-

diente had him in the legs, if not in the head. He lurched; the quickly counterpoising sole of his half-boot screeched in unswept grit on the tile. He stood, resisting the sudden idea of going out to see the Indian maid in her room beyond the laundry-court.

Foggy guilt swirled in him when he thought of the maid, and he cursed aloud.

Turning, he walked through a hall to the old man's room and snapped on its light. It was monastic under the bare bulb's glare—a blue floor, a dresser of scarred oak, a table, a bed made of scroll-bent rods of tarnished brass, and a little wall Virgin. The boy stood resisting it. The old man's dignity was there like a smell, but did not explain itself. On the dresser stood a silver-framed photograph, cloud-haired, of an actress he somehow recognized to be Jean Harlow. It was a publicity picture of a special vintage, but was affectionately inscribed and signed. It did not fit with anything else that was there. He stared at it.

It stared back.

Him, the old bastard, he thought—but principally with puzzlement . . .

In the beginning he and the maid had talked at night in the laundry-court outside her door. She was shy, and alone a good bit, and giggled at his ragged confident Spanish, correcting him. Her people had worked there always and she would not talk to the boy about Don Fernando. She was not unhappy. She had a young man in the upper valley who possessed some education and would one day, maybe soon, be a power in the ejido there. But she saw him only on Sundays; Don Fernando did not encourage the upper-valley people at the hacienda.

"You have no life at all," the boy had said to her roughly, three nights before. He felt his own sophistication to be relative wisdom, and was enraged that ignorance and immobility could so brace the heavy contentment she expressed. "None of you," he said. "The ejido. Maybe they'll let him weigh sacks of grain."

"Maybe," the girl said, placid in the pallidity that came through the open door of her room. "Maybe so, señorito," she said. "But he won't end in the cantina, waving a machete with shouts. And there is no hurry . . ."

Feeling wise still, and miserable, the boy said, "There's always hurry."

"Not in the valley," the girl said quietly.

She was young, with the Indian shyness and a round, brown, velvet face. Abruptly he put his hand on her cheek. She sucked in breath sharply though her teeth and ran inside, closing the door behind her.

That had been all, but it had shamed him; he had not wanted to be alone with her since.

He made a big embarrassed X-mark with his finger on the glass that shielded inexplicable Jean Harlow against the eatings of time, and left the room, the little dog's claws clicking along behind him.

He would apologize . . .

You rode the bay horse (your father having paid for it, sight unseen, when Don Fernando had said someone was offering it for sale) hard up the valley by the river, under the big poplars, and then left the river before you reached the cantina, not wanting to go there first. Rising, the horse's flanks straining against your calves in labored effort of ascent, you passed oxcarts and laden strings of timid people in a roadlet that ran between terraces of irrigated grain and fiber, green. The world there smelled of green, and leather, and dung, and of charcoal and toasted maize in the huts between the fields, and on the higher mountains mists lay. The boy had not in his life known a freshness like that of the green upper valley as your horse mounted its side toward the mists.

Except that long before you were near the real mists you came to an almost vertical belt of cactus and stone and gray-green clawed plants, the trails were there that led to villages in the sierra. Clanking, clicking, short-haired burro-trains came along them. One trail ran simply parallel to the river, far below now. Taking that trail, you stopped somewhere along it and dismounted and sat on a rock, the cold feel of the mists above and behind you on your neck, the horse tearing irritably at clumps of inedibility among the stones, the quilt-patched green of the valley troughed below you, smoke-tufted, split by the roving line of the river's trees.

Sometimes he would sit there for hours smoking *Elegantes*, coughing-strong. Once he yelled aloud in ferocious exultation of aloneness, "By God!"

The upper valley was, too, the brushwood cantina on the way home, and the taste of tepid black beer with loud peasants crowding toward his oddness. They liked him. He liked them, or thought he did, and was a little afraid of them—it was the main reason he went there. He would not talk to them about the old man, toward whom they felt the frank reflex hatred of crows for a crippled owl. They asked him about the States United and the flogging of wetbacks, and told him with pride that they were Reds. Once, when a stumbling-drunk Red with a drawn machete had cursed the boy and had gone outside to ride the bay horse away, one of the others had maced him from the saddle with a shovel and had courteously tied the horse again to its post.

"It is that at times one drinks," the courteous Red said.

"It is so," John Anders said with the solemnity of that dialect, and they laughed to one another to hear their intonation in his mouth, and slapped his shoulder.

And sometimes he ran the bay horse all the way back to the hacienda, the long-pounding lope downhill, and walked him cool in the courtyard there, and rubbed him slick with a cob.

The fact was, he liked living in the valley. It was a recent admission, and had had no effect on his prickling-war with the old man, who perplexed him. He had been at war with many adults, but had managed to touch most of them more painfully than he could touch Fernando Iturriaga.

Maybe, he thought, it was because the others had given a damn . . .

He paused in the open door, winking against night's dark assault, and saw a yellow line beneath the maid's door. When he started down the unrailed steps, the *aguardiente* took him to the right. His foot pawed vacancy. Blackness jerked him cartwheeling down into the unroofed cellar-pit; he landed among shards of bottleglass, right-side-up and sitting, his right leg twisted back under behind him.

At first he knew only a shallowness of force-emptied lungs and fought to get his breath. Then a knowledge of the leg ascended

through him like nausea. In sick shock, he knew that he was about to faint, but the little dog's whine cut into his ken and it was jumping at his face, licking. He took it in his hands and held it, speaking to it as it squirmed and licked and as the sickness went down, and waited while the dull but sharpening pain rose.

His hand was bleeding. The Indian girl was standing above him at the edge of the hole, uttering a mooing sound. He supposed he had made noise.

"Look for help," he told her.

She went away, still mooing. Without shifting, the boy held the dog and met the leg-pain full-face and decided that it would probably be bearable . . . She came back with a gardener Elifonso. Elifonso gritted down the steep steps of the pit and loomed over the boy, smelling of peppers.

"If this is bad, señorito!" he said. "If this is very bad!"

"Don't touch me yet," the boy said.

But Elifonso grabbed him by the armpits and yanked upward, and the boy yelled and struck at him, and when Elifonso let go the hurt was twice what it had yet been. The boy's hand touched a stick; he flailed out with it and Elifonso went back up the steps. The boy shouted upper-valley words at them, and they murmured between themselves in the darkness, above him. He quieted, ashamed but still angry. After a time he asked the girl to bring the bottle of aguardiente from the dining room; when she gave it to him he drank five gulps of it, cold and oily, without stopping. It warmed him and pushed the pain down for a while, and he drank more. Then he vomited and for a long, long time sat coldly full of pain while the quiet Indian voices murmured on above him.

Finally a flashlight glared down into his face, reawakening dull rage. Fernando Iturriaga held it.

After a moment he said quietly to the boy, "You are a disaster."

John Anders said, "You aren't going to touch me."

"Go for the doctor Rodríguez," the old man told Elifonso.

Walking around the pit and down its steps, he knelt beside the boy and played the flashlight on the leg.

"How handsome," he said.

"Don't touch me," the boy said, and raised his stick.

Fernando Iturriaga took it from his hand and dropped it among the broken glass.

"Boy, I will touch you," he said. "I will hurt you too. Shut up. You, Luz, come . . ."

They were careful, but the pain was a twisting shaft up inside him, though it seemed that when the responsibility was no longer yours maybe the pain was not either. The maid mooed all the way. When they had him on the bed in his room, waiting for the doctor, the leg as straight as they had dared put it with the big splinter sticking through the flesh above the knee, the old man said matter-of-factly: "It will have hurt like ten demons."

The boy rolled his head negatively.

"Don't lie," the old man said. "I know hurts. It will have hurt."

He considered, hard eyes candid. "Fat Rodríguez will hurt you more when he comes," he said. "He drank a lot this evening."

Weakened by the bed's comfort against his back, the boy began to cry. He cried because he hurt, and because the doctor would hurt him again, and because the old man clearly did not give a damn about him, and because he was a thousand miles from even a home that he despised—having, therefore, no home—and because the green foreign valley had turned on him and bitten him and was foreign now altogether, and hateful. He laid his forearm across his eyes and sobbed.

Astonishingly, the old man was patting his shoulder.

"Child, child," he said. "It will pass."

The boy stopped sobbing, and after a time uncovered his eyes. The formal hawk's face was smiling gently at him.

"I suppose it will," he said.

"Yes."

"All right," the boy said.

He was listening.

"At least a telegram," the boy's meaty father said earnestly, down-wiping damp hands against the front of gabardine trousers. "Don Fernando, a letter that sat in the club in Mexico City for three weeks was . . ."

Fernando Iturriaga dropped his shoulders, flashed the cupped

palms of his hands briefly upward, and turned away, unapologetic. He felt some pity for the big man, but he felt a little bit nationally obsessed, too. He considered that a telegram would likely have cooled in that club for three weeks also, awaiting the big man's arrival, and even had he known how to telephone him he doubted that he would have tried to do so. The bone had been set.

Crookedly, yes, healing with a bend like a pruned tree fork. Fat Rodríguez, gold spectacled, standing nervous now against the whitewashed wall while the slim young doctor from the capital felt with long fingers the boy's humped femur—Rodríguez had thought of a thick fee but had not earned it. But Rodríguez had been all that there was; even the boy had understood that.

The slim capitaleño did not glance toward Rodríguez as he spoke to the boy's father.

"It will need rebreaking," he said. "There is also infection. A question of various months . . ."

"The hell it will," the boy on the bed said in English.

"Close your mouth," his father said. "For Christ's sake, you make any more trouble now and I'll . . ."

"I'm not going to let them bust it over again," the boy said unemotionally. "I watched them with Phil Evridge at school and he still limps."

The big man's voice shrilled. Rodríguez, his nervousness requiring expression, said to the slim doctor, "It is that sometimes, despite what one can do . . ."

The slim doctor turned on him for an instant two liquid slits, said, "Sí, señor!" and looked away, closing thin lips in punctuation.

Fat Rodríguez shuffled.

Fernando Iturriaga grinned and turned to go outside. My nationals, he thought. But the slim contemptuous capitaleño was of his nationals, too. Did he mean, then, those of his nationals who would end in a place like this valley?

Maybe.

On the gallery he dropped into a big hard chair of aguacate-wood, and the little dog's nose shocked cold against his dangling

hand. He caressed the bulb of its head and not looking felt its warm eyelids with his thumb.

Changing, he . . . Gentling. A week after the boy's fall, three agrarians from the upper valley had come to the hacienda. With some pleasure he had gone out to tell them to go away again. But in their stubbled faces before he spoke, and in their politeness, he saw an actual concern for the boy. He had not expected that. Quietly, he led them himself to the boy's room, and afterward spoke to them about that year's crops . . .

You are effeminated, he told himself.

Prepared for the big-meaty-gringo anger, he was a little disappointed when the father came out, alone, with cold control on his face.

He said, "Don Fernando, it was not well done."

"No."

"I don't mean that fat fool!"

His voice trilled at the end and Fernando Iturriaga glanced up hopefully, but the control was still there. The blue capable eyes glittered down at him like tile-chips.

"There will not be a guest ranch."

"No," the old man said, and sighed courteously. Even in childhood, the line of the mountains where he was now looking had seemed to have the shape of a woman lying on her side. In childhood he had ridden there, on the high rocky slopes under the clouds, and the gringo boy had told him of doing the same.

Gently he pinched the small dog's ear.

"What a very great shame," he said in exact British English.

"By God!" Anders said, and stood above him for a moment longer, and then went out to the long brown-and-cream car to bring back a blanket.

The old man watched as all of them, the maid and the gardener and the doctor and even hopeful Rodríguez, bore armloads of books and clothes to load them into the luggage compartment. At last the capitaleño and Elifonso brought the blanketed boy between them through the door. They paused with him beside the chair.

"Well," the boy said. "Many thanks."

"Nothing, son," Fernando Iturriaga said. "May they make you a good oilman."

Crooked amusement split the boy's face, and he said a word from the upper valley that made the gardener laugh. They carried him to the car, and the old man watched still while the father strode past him unspeaking and managed to direct them into ramming the boy's head into a doorpost and the back of the front seat. At the end, the maid Luz ran out with the whittled crutches she had bought for the boy in the village, which he had refused to try.

By then, however, the car was moving; the maid stopped behind it holding the crutches and began foolishly to weep. Fernando Iturriaga saw the flash of the boy's face toward him from the rear seat. In the narrow gateway of the wall a stone tilted the big car's rear, and he felt a reprehensible surge of national pleasure as its finned fender gritted against the arch.

Fee-less, fat Rodríguez stood in the courtyard with the maid, his hands clenching and unclenching at his sides. Then he walked with head down and wagging to his old Ford, and drove away in it.

"Well, then," Fernando Iturriaga said aloud and for some reason in French.

He stared across the sunlit, slab-paved court at a section of wall where, mixed among the pocks of revolutionary bullets which in 1911 had killed his brother and a cousin and the peons who had stuck by them, were newer gray marks where he and the boy's father had held pistol practice some months before, speaking of the grandeurs of guest-ranching as they shot. It gave him satisfaction to think about how easily he had beaten the big American; then it disturbed him to recognize the satisfaction.

You are becoming nationally obsessed, he told himself.

He felt quite alone. Diffidently, the Indian girl came and asked if he would want his midday meal. He said that certainly he would. Hearing his calm tone as permissive, she said, "They left money. The big one said it was for room and food."

"Shut up," he said.

"Caray!" she protested.

"Shut up. What was he doing there in the laundry-court, beside your house?"

She went back in. He was half-certain she was his daughter, the child of the cook that had cost him his wife and sons. The cook had died quietly and quickly one winter, after the way of Indians, and the child had grown up there. He would give her something when she married her prim young man from the ejido. Not much. There was unhappily little to give.

The old man walked to his room, looked about it for a moment, and in leaving lightly, affectionately flicked the picture of Jean Harlow with his forefingernail. He had not known her; the picture had been some sort of joke from a friend, its point lost now. Or maybe he had bet and won it.

He went around to the shaded garden between his breakfast window and the wall. At its gate he examined the small perfect roses with pleasure, and he moved into the green gloom of the great aguacates slowly, so that hens in the path edged aside with only ritual cackling. He would tell Elifonso that the violets needed water; the outlet in the wall when he looked at it was closed with a whittled plug. Diverted river-water, cool and vocal, ran in all the circumference of the peripheral wall. Two hundred years before when his people had raised it—first, his father had said, the wall first of all for protection—the old Moorish water-love had made them build conduits inside it that ran into the houses, the gardens, the washwomen's court, the stables. . . . As a child he had leaned against the wall and listened while the water spoke its words.

Now he went to it again and put his ear against it and heard the water. In the pigpens these days there was only a drip from hairy green slime; he had meant for years to have it cleaned. A man lived in the town who could do that, somehow, with hook-ended wires.

Beside him there was a sound. It was the dog, squatting, one foot held delicately before it in the air as though in supplication. Its bright dark eyes were on his face.

"Vidal," the old man said.

The dog yipped at its name.

Fernando Iturriaga said, "You miss him, poor Vidal."

The dog whined and pumped the air with its foot and sat up as it had been taught. Commandingly it barked. The old man leaned down and picked it up, stroking its head as he glanced about himself. Against one of the aguacates leaned a section of rusted pipe. It had a familiar look. Holding the dog gently in the crook of his arm he walked to the tree and picked up the pipe, half a meter long, heavy, plugged with dirt. They had used it one year, he recalled now, as a stake for strung sweet-peas.

He hefted it, and then in one deft motion, with Indian grace, he swung the little dog downward, holding its hind legs together in his left hand, and even as it yelped in surprise hit it a swift uncruel blow on its skull.

At the base of the tree he laid the dog and the pipe down beside each other, beyond the violets his mother had brought from Asturias, and rubbed the palms of his hands horseman-wise against his hips.

Now, he thought. Now maybe we will have peace here.

SUBDIVISION

By CHRISTOPHER WATERS

I like with bright red barrow Sunday morns
To clank and shock to woodward for topsoil
Oh murderous haunt of mowers summer eves
And empty bonhomie between new yards
I do not care a jot what is my hound
And I am endless fond of ill-kempt lawns
That show thereby their owners better worked
I am for sky-high fences all around
To ostracize my neighbors ere they me
Comme doggies burn to yellow all the box
And bark me why if high walls mean bad friends
The corner lots sell at a premium

Wallace Stevens: the poet in society

RICHARD M. GOLLIN

For the poet to participate in the everyday affairs of society is inevitable, yet the popular image of him remains the one provided by the Romantics: the poet is conceived as an isolated prophet surveying mankind or his own sensibility from Parnassus. Equally misleading is the assumption that a sensitive plant such as a poet is necessarily unfit to meet the demands of a practical world. The first popular conception mistakes the metaphor of an elevated detachment which poetry itself creates, reading it as a fact of the poet's life; the second originates, probably, in the notion that poetry arises only from a disabling neurosis. We nod understandingly at Emily Dickinson in her room, and sympathetically at Hart Crane and Dylan Thomas drowning themselves each in his own manner. Yet, the poet's attempt to grip personal attitudes into ordered language does not imply inability to cope with the tensions of modern life; quite the reverse. And poets, it is frequently necessary to remind ourselves, must eat.

The Muse provides only spiritual sustenance; the poet always seeks elsewhere for bread and butter, or as Wallace Stevens put it, for "a fig. . . , / And cream for the fig and silver for the cream." The buying public for most poetry is too small to keep poets and their families in shoes; most poetry requires concentrated reading, and frequently repays such concentration only with the hard currency of self-knowledge; less demanding kinds of literature are more available and, as publishers know, more profitable. The patron died in Dr. Johnson's time, and the federal government is uninterested in replacing him. Consequently, most of our poets are wedded to teaching in the universities, for better or for worse, not for much richer, but certainly not for poorer. Of the others, William Carlos Williams is a physician; T. S. Eliot an editor; Archibald MacLeish has dabbled in government, even, briefly, as an Undersecretary of State. Nevertheless, we are somewhat shocked that Wallace Stevens was, until his death in 1955,

a highly successful lawyer and vice-president of the Hartford Accident and Indemnity Insurance Corporation and, at the same time, a poet whose great stature in the world of poetry was acknowledged by the Bollingen and Pulitzer prizes.

We are not accustomed to thinking of a business executive as a poet. The executive enjoys enormous prestige in our society; the poet relatively little. The businessman is thought to live in the center of things, hammering out of his industry the hard realities of cash and material progress, giving the characteristic stamp to our culture; while our Men of Letters in this century, retiring to the relatively minor role (to use Allen Tate's phrase) of "custodians of language," frequently hold themselves aloof from that culture, viewing it as tawdry, materialistic, and dehumanized. The image of the philistine and fumbling Babbitt haunts the literary mind, and the new look among businessmen personified in such supermen as Cash McCall is small consolation. Yet Wallace Stevens was of Cash McCall's world; as an expert in surety bond work, he lived comfortably among contracts, legal briefs, actuarial tables, statutes, and the other *materia medica* of our economy. And all the while, he was writing a poetry of elegant diction, incredible technical virtuosity, luminous imagery, and a density of symbolic statement that even such poet-critics as Randall Jarrell have found obscure—marvelous, but obscure. We might expect from Stevens a poetry of hard statement commenting on modern life with something like Hart Crane's tortured affirmations or E. E. Cummings' satirical irony. But what we find are musings, philosophical meditations, and discursive dialogues filled with blue guitars, golden birds, blackbirds, pine trees, pineapples, and Poussin. The mind is appalled at this apparition of Wandering Aengus become philosopher and negotiating insurance contracts. In Wallace Stevens, we seem to have an artist not only alienated from society but alienated from himself.

In one sense, he was. Stevens originally took refuge from the world of daily obligations, with its barrenness, its violence—these are Stevens' terms—and its fragmentation of human values, by heaping up around him in his imagination the sanctions of a world of art, of brilliant order in which whatever human values remained he composed in patterns of light and shadow. "We . . .

crawl out of our offices and classrooms," he once said, "and become alert at the opera." The income which was a consequence of his profession he could spend traveling, buying paintings, and listening to music; these leisure activities provided him with the dominant metaphors of his first poems, and with a perspective for viewing all life outside the office as he wished, as art. In his spare time Stevens became that *fin de siècle* phenomenon, an esthete. Yet he lived to project that esthetic point of view out over the world he inhabited and, in his poetry, to present what is quite rare in our literature, a hopeful and ennobling image of the human mind dominating the recognized chaos of modern experience.

The central problem of our time has been defined so frequently with the expression "the loss of myth" that such words cease to hold meaning. But the problem involves, clearly, the loss of a unified body and structure of belief which verifies and is verified by our experiences and values, a faith which Christianity provided for our society before scientific thinking, "naturalism," made relativists, pragmatists, and skeptics out of so many of us. Matthew Arnold saw the confusion and was unable to continue writing poetry; Yeats struggled to construct a new myth to meet his needs; Eliot surveyed the wasteland of a world without meaning and returned to Christianity; other poets rejoiced temporarily in the Marxist myth, and some of these have since followed Eliot. The enormous individuality of modern poetry results from each poet constructing his own articles of faith out of his own experience; interpreting the private symbolisms which serve as sacraments to these faiths has become the main occupation of modern literary criticism. I shall not attempt even a brief elucidation of Stevens' private symbolism, though some comment on it is inevitable. But I do want to explore some of the principles underlying Stevens' poetry, his private act of faith, and to suggest some of the ways the social situation in which he worked and wrote gave these principles shape, a present meaning, and a present value.

When Stevens graduated from Harvard at the turn of the century, the coteries which later nourished so much *avant-garde*

literature had not yet formed. Life in Greenwich Village or exile in Europe were not clear alternatives to a professional career; Stevens entered law school and became a lawyer in 1904. When ten years later, in 1914, he contributed his first poems to *Poetry* and later to a little magazine called *The Rogue*, he had already reached the relatively settled age of thirty-five.

Poetry at that time was being bludgeoned by Ezra Pound and others into its break with the late Victorian and Georgian verse traditions; Delmore Schwartz has called the period one of "free verse and free love." But both were hard fought for. Under the tutelage of James Branch Cabell and such magazines as *The Smart Set*, sophistication became the highest virtue among young intelligentsia; the age broke with religious and moral traditions, and it found serious purpose in mocking the past, burning with a hard, gem-like flame, and cultivating a flamboyant estheticism.

Stevens shared in this estheticism, though his legal and insurance work kept him from whole-souled participation. All of the poems in *Harmonium*, his first book, were written in this spirit of sophisticated grandeur, which nurtured the flippant mockery of such titles as "Le Monacle de Mon Oncle" and "Floral Decorations for Bananas," as well as the self-conscious self-mocking of his semi-autobiographical poem "The Comedian as the Letter C." The poems in *Harmonium* also reveal Stevens' roots in French symbolism, particularly in the works of Baudelaire, Mallarmé, and Rimbaud. This influence is visible in many of his characteristic techniques and attitudes—in his delight in the luxury of sound and image which is his hallmark, and in his synesthesia, his crossing of sense impressions to fuse musical, pictorial, and narrative images into one experience. The whole of "Peter Quince at the Clavier" is a synesthetic experience, and so are such wonderful similes as "the leaves were falling like notes from a piano." But Stevens would not have elevated such attitudes and rhetorical devices to the stature of a world view, a religion, if they had been for him merely techniques. They were not. They were the reality of sense experience in which he took refuge from the realities of human affairs.

Behind this sensuous reality lay the metaphysical tradition of philosophers from John Locke through Coleridge (Stevens

cites C. M. Joad), who had reduced the reality posited by the intellect to "solid, static objects extended in space . . . blank, without color"—a "complete poverty," Stevens called it. It is a world barren of moral value—a convenient world for a businessman in a competitive economy to postulate—and because Stevens accepted it he was unconcerned, in his early poetry, with human beings in society and with the moral question such human beings usually raise.

But one could anchor esthetic values in such a reality. No observer ever sees this grey philosopher's world; the human imagination superimposes colors onto it, and organizes the observer's vision into an analogous world, the one actually perceived. This analogous world is still blank of moral values; its values are purely esthetic. But if such a world seems barren, it is the reader's imagination which is at fault, not the world's body. If all men used their imaginations properly, Stevens believed, the world would seem beautiful—cigar stores, waste dumps, and all.

Since the world so seen is a subjective world, existing in the mind of the beholder, the imagination is free to transmute its sensations of color and sound, and to project fanciful figures into its everyday perceptions. In addition, it can blend sensation and the recollection of sensation into exotic forms which are the viewer's own creations: Stevens wrote one poem in which he contemplates a pineapple and sees twelve entirely different scenes, each quite real, and each recreated in the reader's mind, as is any scene or image in literature, as the reader's own felt experience. Finally, and this for Stevens was the imagination's most important function, it can reduce the chaos of the senses to an esthetically pleasing order: in one of Stevens' best-known poems he imaginatively places a jar on a hill in Tennessee; the jar immediately centers and orders the surrounding wilderness into a carefully organized image recalling a painting by Poussin. The poem itself constitutes a composed metaphor for the process of ordering which takes place in the reader's mind.

Stevens' poetic imagination was the sanctuary to which he escaped when the world of legal briefs and business debate pressed in on him too violently; he once called poetry "a violence from within that protects us from a violence without . . . the imagina-

tion pressing back against the pressure of reality." And he added, "It seems, in the last analysis, to have something to do with our self-preservation."

So it does. The poet preserved himself by filtering out of his perception most human beings and human choice, anxiety, suffering, compassion, hope, joy, sin, guilt, and retribution. He admitted into *Harmonium* only patrician feelings and the esthetic values of form, structure, texture, and color, those values most tractable to the mind of an esthete. John Crowe Ransom, himself a notable poet and esthetician, once said of an early Stevens poem, "[It] has a calculated complexity, and its technical competence is so high that to study it, if you do that sort of thing, it to be happy." We can easily seek out this happiness by examining "Bantams in Pine-Woods." The poem is short:

Chieftain Iffucan of Azcan in caftan
Of tan with henna hackles, halt!

Damned universal cock, as if the sun
Was blackamoor to bear your blazing tail.

Fat! Fat! Fat! Fat! I am the personal.
Your world is you. I am my world.

You ten foot poet among inchlings. Fat!
Begone! An inchling bristles in these pines,

Bristles, and points their Appalachian tangs,
And fears not portly Azcan nor his hoos.

Chieftain Iffucan of Azcan is one of the more bizarre inhabitants of Stevens' imagination, created as much by the sound of the words as by the words themselves. The poem seems concerned with a dispute over a question of identity, with the speaker, an "inchling," a Bantam in pine woods, defending his "personal" by holding portly Azcan at bay and berating him with impotent name-calling. The irritating Azcan parades brilliantly and flamboyantly along the rhythms of his own name, superior even to the sun, a "ten-foot poet among inchlings"; while the inchling noisily asserts that Azcan is trespassing outside of his own

world. Stevens presents a barely moving tableau, a stalemate.

What does it mean? One suggestion is that Stevens is Azcan, a ten-foot poet, and that the inchling is a critic annoyed with Stevens' extravagance in diction. Another suggestion is that the inchling is the poet who has dreamed Azcan up out of his own imagination and now must assert a control over him which has nearly been lost to prevent his mind from being overwhelmed by Azcan's too-independent and overweening splendor. But both the too-lordly Azcan and the puny but determined inchling are obviously creatures of Stevens' imagination. They correspond in Stevens' system of symbols to the imagination's two powers of creation and control, which appear elsewhere in his poems as polar forces together creating art, the polar principles of profusion and order, colored tropical fecundity and bleak northern pine, the sun and the snow, summer and winter.

The poem is a drama, a metaphor painted within Stevens' mind and projected out into our own, of the imagination's faculty for order attempting to keep its relatively bare, Lilliputian domain inviolate against too-extravagant creations. One notices that both antagonists in this little puppet play are faintly ridiculous, but they generate as much overt conflict as one can find in *Harmonium*. In this poem, the imagination seems to create a rather small world, however sufficient, in this period of Stevens' life, to press back the pressure of reality.

But transforming the dull world without imagination into the heightened, imagined realities which dominate language—that is, writing poems—was an activity Stevens engaged in for his own satisfaction, not to lay bare the skull beneath the skin or to give voice to the human predicament. Poetry was for him private communion, not public communication; "I write," he once said, "because it helps me to accept and validate my experience." Consequently, he achieved independently the same concentration in his poetry that Ezra Pound's red pencil had given Eliot; it was unnecessary for him to stretch his language out into the common modes of discourse. A poem began and ended with himself. Relatively free from concern with an audience, he wrote as he chose, and he chose to please himself. It was just as well; *Harmonium* sold barely a hundred copies.

Stevens did not mind his isolation from an audience because he felt no pressing obligation to analyze or remake society; he did not believe this the poet's role. His break with the moralizing traditions familiar to the poetry-reading public was complete, and those who came upon his imagined visions could take them or leave them alone. If they read his poetry, Stevens was pleased to see his "imagination become the light in the minds of others," but if they rejected that imagination they were the losers. As one of his poems in *Harmonium* says to such a reader:

That strange flower, the sun
Is just what you say.
Have it your way.

The world is ugly,
And the people are sad.

Society ignored Stevens, and Stevens ignored society. He settled his social responsibilities by settling society's insurance claims; his work in the world freed him from a desire to become society's unacknowledged legislator, as Shelley had thought himself, or to become a smith forging in his soul the uncreated conscience of his race, as Joyce's Stephen Dedalus conceived his mission. Instead of the moral outrage which set Shelley to floating tracts in toy boats in Hyde Park, Stevens felt only a desire to compose his own mind.

The resulting poems are gorgeous, grave, urbane, artful, metaphysically profound, often deliciously wicked. Some, like "Sunday Morning," which presents Stevens' secular estheticism as a religion more satisfying than the dead dogmas of Christianity, may even be great. But the chaos Stevens confronts in these poems is that of the pre-Jazz age; the giant imagination resisting the pressures of the world is not more imposing, though no less, than Chieftain Iffucan. Stevens' great talent, seeded among the Flowers of Evil of French symbolism, planted in leisure time from the insurance business, and left to grow in a hothouse secure from cold conceptions of the poet's role in society, spent itself arranging brilliant flowers for piano and orchestra.

What Stevens' career shows us, however, is that the isolated imagination takes on more than the color of the world it inhabits. Even in *Harmonium*, Stevens was aware of this: in one poem he declares, "I am what is around me," illustrates with an aphorism, "One is not a duchess/ A hundred yards from a carriage," and then transforms the reader by providing suitable backdrops. These are: "A black vestibule" and then "A high bed sheltered by curtains." The reader paints himself in into a luxurious, snug scene, and composes himself in bed. Only Stevens' omnipresent irony, his injection of slang terms into the cotton candy, his sudden deflating cracks, an occasional ant creeping into the picture, a movement of a blackbird's eye, keep these poems from seeming mere brilliant virtuoso pieces.

Yet, if the poet is what is around him, he cannot preserve internal order while living in a chaotic society. In a poem entitled aptly "Connoisseur of Chaos," Stevens observed that "the squirming facts exceed the squamous mind," that even at the opera one is aware of the crowds jostling outside. His second book of poems, *Ideas of Order*, was published during the depression. Its opening poem is a "Farewell to Florida," to Chief Iffucan's world, and a return to the leafless north, to "a slime of men in crowd." The esthetic vision, other poems state, cannot be sustained; "the waltz/ Is no longer a mode of desire." "Mountain-minded Hoon," the poet-emperor who had served formal teas in his palace in *Harmonium*, "discovered that his forms had vanished." As Stevens explained in "Botanist on Alp (No. 1)," "Panoramas are not what they used to be. . . . Marx has ruined Nature,/ For the moment." Stevens found a social function for his poetry despite himself, and into these poems entered for the first time "Mobs of men . . . requiring order beyond their speech." "Some harmonious skeptic" (such as Stevens) was needed to

. . . unite these figures of men and their shapes
Will glisten again with motion, the music
Will be motion and full of shadows.

Stevens did not follow MacLeish, Spender, and Auden onto a soap box, though his poetry began to assume the "lingua franca

et jocundissima" of common speech. The poet's desire for composure became an intense "rage for order," still for a personal order, but one unattainable until social order could be restored. The chaos of modern society became in Stevens' world of art what Robert Penn Warren once called the "Merkutio in the garden," the antagonist which like the snake in paradise provides contrast, tension, and an image of the conflicts within our own minds. Stevens' esthetic values of order and harmony, resisting the pressures of suffering and pain, became moral values. When the poet seated himself at the piano to play Mozart, to assert the values of harmony in the face of chaos, he began despite himself to sound like Shelley:

Be thou, be thou
The voice of angry fear,
The voice of this besieging pain.

Be thou that great wintry sound
As of the great wind howling,
By which sorrow is released,
Dismissed, absolved
In a starry placating.

* * *

The snow is falling
And the streets are full of cries.
Be seated, thou.

The vision of paradise lost, Stevens' poems became less concerned with comic-book battles of Iffucan and inchling; the inchling turned his Appalachian tangs against abstract myths of the masses, and shifting social calamities, and became the giant creator even of God. Esthetic order in such a world is necessary for sanity; Stevens' rage for order gave his poetry a power, gravity, depth, and desperate urgency nowhere seen in *Harmonium*. The clavier of Peter Quince became Milton's organ, while Stevens' mind became a metaphor for that of a world striving to order its affairs.

Stevens' poems written during the second world war frequently sound like sections of *Paradise Lost*. They are all deeply concerned with man trapped between two poles of nothingness, birth and death, in an ignored paradise of the world in which even an

"Esthetique du Mal" can absolve evil in a starry placating. "Poetry exceeding music must take the place/ Of empty heaven and its hymns," Stevens announced, and his "Notes Toward a Supreme Fiction" present the process of man re-creating himself larger in his own image, making a heaven of his experience on earth. The difference in tone and seriousness from the seeds of this doctrine in *Harmonium* is obvious; even death becomes a great human experience rather than an esthetic retirement. "Sunday Morning," in *Harmonium*, had ended with an image for human life gracefully ending in deepening shadows:

And, in the isolation of the sky,
At evening, casual flocks of pigeons make
Ambiguous undulations as they sink,
Downward to darkness, on extended wings.

While "Flyer's Fall," a war poem, ends with a tremendous invocation far exceeding music:

Darkness, nothingness of human after-death,
Receive and keep him in the deepnesses of space—

Profundum, physical thunder, dimension in which
We believe without belief, beyond belief.

The dispute between Iffucan and the inchling is projected in later poems as a battle between the mind and the sky, between a hero of powerful imagination and the grey void of life without meaning. Stevens' early flippancy, however deft, virtually disappeared. Social pressures from which Stevens had early insulated himself in a flamboyant estheticism forced that estheticism, and the great stylistic virtuosity it had bred, into the service of a new individual God, man as the imaginative creator of his own orderly universe despite external chaos.

I suspect that if this religion had been soul-satisfying, Stevens would have stopped writing poetry. But as "The Poem that Took the Place of a Mountain" reveals, it was the searching for a God-like point of view for surveying ultimate order that concerned Stevens, not the finding:

There it was, word for word,
The poem that took the place of a mountain.

* * *

It reminded him how he had needed
A place to go to in his own direction,

How he had recomposed the pines,
Shifted the rocks and picked his way among clouds,

For the outlook that would be right,
Where he would be complete in an unexplained completion:

The exact rock where his inexactnesses
Would discover, at last, the view toward which they had edged,

Where he could lie and, gazing down at the sea,
Recognize his unique and solitary home.

While the poem speaks of such a perspective, such a reconciliation, it does not present one; no poem can. But what it does present is a moving analogy for the attainment of that perspective.

This poem was written during his last years, and in it he remains as he began, the solitary theorist of order, rather than the practical man in the world. But Stevens came to see a supreme practical function in society for such a theorist. In a talk given shortly before he died, Stevens distinguished between the technicians (like himself as an insurance man) who merely carry on the work of the world, and the theorists (like himself as a poet), whose function is to overcome the fragmentation of our experience, as he said, "to conceive of the whole and, from the center of their immense perspectives, to tell us about it." Stevens did not solve the universe, but he told us what solving it is like, and his poetry remains, finally, morally equal to the chaos in which it was written, his imagination its own "necessary angel" pitted against anarchy. Perhaps the most astonishing fact of Stevens' career is that his faith in human ability to achieve such immense perspectives grew rather than shrank, as the world he inhabited became more fragmentary and more violent. His poetry absorbed that violence and grew in stature with that faith.

The decadent South

JACK GARLINGTON

Like many Southerners, I must have been thirty years old before I found out I was decadent.

During my young life I wasn't even sure what the word meant (I'm still not certain of the pronunciation), and while I ran across it a time or so I always assumed that, like "effete," it went with "Easterner" or "European," the chief difference being that it didn't alliterate.

I think one reason we Southerners didn't know we were decadent is that we were poor. If you don't mind a paradox, one virtue vice has is its limitations: some vices have to have something to work on, and in the Texas of my youth none of us had enough of anything to be decadent. We were too poor to be anything but good.

Now I mustn't overstate the case, and it's true that a number of things went on in our village that Mother didn't approve of. Some of the school teachers smoked, for instance. Joe Luchek held dances every Saturday night in an old warehouse down on the highway. The barber was known to drink. There had been a rape case in an adjacent county, and premature pregnancies were always cropping up, even among the Baptists.

But some of these things could be explained. The school teachers had a pretty dismal time all the way around; so nobody really begrudged them an occasional cigarette as long as they kept the shades drawn. There was nothing anybody could do about Joe Luchek's dances: Joe himself was perturbed about them. The barber who drank was anything but decadent—to decay you have to have some character to begin with.

And as for rape and pregnancy, we never assumed that they came from anything decadent, since as far as we could tell, the initial impulse was the same that started our very best families. Some of the claims of rape were merely the young lady's reappraisal of the situation—emotion recollected in tranquillity, as it

were—and it seemed unjust to the boy to make her change of mind retroactive. The pregnancies were usually miscalculated, mistimed, or remiss in legal technicalities, and even the boys involved didn't seem decadent. More often than not they were hired-hands or grocery clerks, and once the girls drew the marital bead on them they volunteered for the altar, settled down, and had hordes of perfectly legitimate children as fast as parturition permitted. It was only the oldest child that got a head start on the law, and perhaps there was a bit of justice in the fact that for his precociousness he ended up being a bastard.

At any rate, we thought we were just the opposite of decadent. We thought we were young, green, hardworking, and Bible-ridden, and some years later, when I moved north and found I was decadent, I was almost pleased: decadence does have dash, and heaven knows my hometown could have used a bit of brightening. For we were a saving, shouting, and religious people. Our Southern God was hardly less severe with us than were our Northern brothers. Our God was all sulphur and scarlet, bluster and blow, and he had us properly intimidated. His eye was everywhere, just like a bloody cat's (as Gwilym observes in Dylan Thomas' story), and while we all toyed with a bit of sin from time to time, we didn't even fool *ourselves* into thinking that he, or the whole village for that matter, wouldn't find out about it even before we got the car back to Main street. But he had us too well-trained to quibble. So inexorably did everything turn out wrong that, had we *not* been well-trained, we might have been tempted to stray, for it was apparent that Mrs. Prothro, a widow of impenetrable virtue, got hailed out fully as often as did Mr. Carmichael, who made enough money bootlegging to keep himself solvent in farming.

But none of us challenged any of these premises. We had a refined relationship with our God (on our side at least; he didn't seem to care), and none of us was a Job. It never dawned on us to question his ways. If Eliphaz had told us we were being ravaged not for God's mysterious reasons but for our wickedness we would have agreed. It wouldn't seem gentlemanly to attribute our troubles to someone who wasn't around to defend himself; moreover we had been notified that he had endowed us with infinite riches, though sometimes when we looked at the anemic fields all

about the village something very like a doubt began to glimmer just below the threshold of thought.

If we had thought of decadence at all, we would have thought of an Eastern type: maybe an offspring of an old family, a younger man with rank and education and money, who'd let it all go for liquor and licentiousness. We didn't know anybody like that. Our village was founded in 1923, and even by the thirties, when my family moved in, it didn't look much better. Main street contained a few drugstores, a ladies' ready-to-wear, a grocery, a barber shop, and two restaurants, and it would take great ability to be decadent in a setting like that. In movies we often saw decadent types, but they were almost invariably swathed in white tie and tails, and seemed to spend most of their time in night clubs; the only thing we had that approximated a night club was Bill Papadopoulos' Golden Eagle Cafe, and if someone wanted to be decadent in there, all one could do was wish him well and arrange to be absent when it happened.

I've read in books, since, that Southern decadence feeds on two things: memories of the Civil War and the debasement of the Negro. We remembered the Civil War, all right; most of my ancestors fought in it or were the nineteenth-century equivalent of a 4-F, but there wasn't much we could do about it any longer. And I don't know that it dawned on us to do anything. There was, it was true, a proud family legend that we had at one time owned slaves, but as far as that goes, there was also a legend that Aunt Minnie had had five husbands, one of them an albino, and I don't know that either situation furthered any specific project in our minds. None of us would have tried to emulate Aunt Minnie, Lord knows, and as for the desire to have a slave again, we couldn't even afford hired help. We remembered the Civil War as a rather stirring episode when Northern industrialism triumphed over what was obviously a good and decent people, a triumph that still seems to be going on. We had a number of quaint legends concerning the North: for one thing, it started at Kansas City, which was where you emptied your billfold and put your money inside your vest. The North consisted of a crowd of people with strange names and accents who could always do more work in a day than a Southerner could in a week. We felt rather

put down by the Northerners' ability to work; obviously if they hadn't worked so hard we would have won the War Between the States, and if it takes work to win a war, who wants to win it anyway? To have productive effort be the decisive element gives a prosy ending to what might otherwise be a romantic episode: where's greatness, if it's all a matter of work?

As for the Negro, I think the best thing is to grant that we were wrong and throw ourselves on the mercy of the reader, who—after looking into his own racial practices—may be a little more tempted toward leniency than he would otherwise. The Negro in the South has always been in a bad position, though I might observe that some of the more brutal episodes in the literature of Southern decadence are about as typical of the South as, say, crime is of the nation in general. It exists, but most people don't participate in it or approve of it. But I suppose if you're guilty of general indifference, specific crime is part of your burden.

At any rate, I still think the literature of Southern decadence has been a bit overworked, and if one were a fiction writer it would be pleasant to start up some stories of Southern non-decadence. I have no idea what they would be like, since decadence is to non-decadence as Cinderella's ugly step-sisters are to Cinderella: the ugly side has a strong initial advantage. However that is, these stories would deal with the large number of people in the South who spend their lives doing (within the human approximation) what they ought to do. You can see that for that very reason these stories will never get written, thanks to the paucity of dramatic highlights, and it might be easier to appropriate from some other territory. One could easily set Hamlin Garland's stories in the South, since they're as true of the South as of the Middle West. Or one could do a James Fenimore Cooper sort of thing with a Southern background, or transplant Sinclair Lewis, Edna Ferber, or Robert Frost.

By way of repayment we would gladly give up some of our writers and ship their works to the North. There's only one disadvantage. If Railway Express finds them as heavy as we do, the cost would be prohibitive.

The chemistry of mental illness

EDWARD PODOLSKY

The latest trend in the concept and treatment of mental illness is along chemical lines. Biological psychiatrists are of the opinion that the basis of mental disorder is to be found at the cellular level, where various chemical reactions take place that result in mental illness and aberrations. For centuries it has been known that eating bread made of fungus-infected grain (ergot) affected the brain and caused a crazed illness, epidemics of which had driven whole populaces mad in Europe, Russia, and even the United States.

Quite accidentally, about ten years ago, a chemist named Hoffmann noticed, while working in his laboratory with a salt of d-lysergic acid (an active principle of ergot), that he was experiencing a very peculiar agitation and dizziness. He went home, got into bed, and found that he was in a not unpleasant state of drunkenness characterized by an extremely stimulating fantasy. This was accompanied by a vivid play of colors. The condition lasted about two hours. The salt he had that day succeeded in forming in his laboratory was d-lysergic acid diethylamide tartrate. To confirm the effects he had experienced, on the following day he took by mouth 250 micrograms of the new salt (the smallest amount of ergot expected to give an effect). Hoffmann experienced even more fantastic and disturbing sensations than he had previously.

Since that time psychiatrists have been studying quite intensely the psychotic-inducing effects of d-lysergic acid diethylamide or LSD. Both normal and mentally ill individuals have been studied in attempts to arrive at an understanding of the causes of schizophrenia, the most common of mental ailments.

Mescaline, as well as LSD, produces symptoms closely resembling schizophrenia. There is alteration in bodily sensations, perception is distorted, time either passes too fast or too slowly, and thinking, feeling, and behavior depart from the normal. The

value of LSD as a drug for experimental use in psychiatry lies in the fact that normal persons under its influence can describe what they are experiencing without becoming unaware that they are under the influence of this drug. In other words, they have not lost contact with reality. For this reason, the effects of the drug can be studied in a state of clear consciousness while the person is able to describe in detail the various mental changes that this drug brings about. As little as one millionth of a gram per kilogram of body weight produces well-defined mental changes.

When LSD is given to neurotic individuals, it sweeps up all sorts of ideas from the unconscious to the conscious mind. Psychiatrists have used LSD as an aid to psychotherapy because it gets at the seat of repressed memories and causes them to emerge into the light of the conscious mind.

Just how the mental changes are produced by chemicals is not very clear at this time. However, clues are constantly being found which may help the psychiatrists to arrive at some understanding of how chemical changes lead to mental phenomena.

At the present time physiologists in analyzing their observations on the effects of LSD and other drugs in normal individuals and in schizophrenics think that the drugs interfere with a physiological process known as the adrenalin cycle. Most scientists are of the opinion that the adrenalin cycle is involved in mental illness. It has been noted that five chemical substances, all plant alkaloids, would bring about hallucinations without other disturbing symptoms. They therefore called these substances hallucinogens (hallucination producers): mescaline, LSD, harmine, ibogaine and hashish. It was noted that the molecular structure of the first four is similar, that one, mescaline, has a make-up quite like a substance known as indole, and that the other three contain parts also resembling the substance indole. These scientists reasoned that if they could find a substance within the body which contained the indole nucleus and behaved like a hallucination producer, they might have a clue as to what caused schizophrenia.

At this point, in the research, a fortunate accident occurred. While listening to a recording of one of the investigator's experiences under mescaline influence, another of the investigators re-

marked that he had had just such experiences while taking adrenalin for his asthma. Other similar experiences were found reported in medical literature. Dr. Erich Lindemann had reported that the symptoms of schizophrenia patients were greatly aggravated when they had received injections of adrenalin. A hospital anesthesiologist recalled that he had noted profound psychological disturbances during the war when he had to use a deteriorated adrenalin solution. When adrenalin spoils it turns pink. Pink adrenalin contains adrenochrome. Adrenochrome is also found in the human body in small amounts. It contains the indole nucleus.

Now another avenue of research was opened. Adrenochrome was given to human volunteers and it produced the same psychotic symptoms as produced by mescaline. Mescaline and adrenochrome have similar chemical structures.

Another substance which occurs in the body and contains the indole nucleus is a metabolic product of tryptamine, called serotonin. Serotonin is concerned with nerve metabolism. Now serotonin is a most important substance in the chemical scheme of mental illness. Drs. D. W. Wooley and E. Shaw had for several years been speculating on its importance. They came to the conclusion that the mental changes caused by drugs are the result of a serotonin-deficiency which the drugs create in the brain. If this be true, then the naturally occurring mental disorders—for example, schizophrenia—may be the result of a deficiency of serotonin in the brain arising from the metabolic failure rather than from the drug action.

What is in the body of the mentally ill person that makes him act the way he does? Some twenty-five years ago, Dr. David I. Macht began to develop the science of phyopharmacology, which is the study of the use of plants or plant tissues for the study of drugs and poisons. Through it, poisonous qualities in the blood can be discovered that do not show up in tests with animals by other methods.

The blood and spinal fluid from the mentally ill contain a mysterious poison which may be helpful in psychiatric diagnosis. Fed to seedlings of a kind of lima bean, the blood of the patients stunted the growth of the plants. Blood from more than 1,200

mental hospital patients was tested by Dr. Macht. He added one percent solutions of their blood to test tubes in which bean seedlings grew in liquid plant food. Only blood from true psychotics, however, caused stunting; the worse the psychosis, the more seriously the plant was affected. Blood from mildly upset alcoholics or neurotics produced no toxicity.

Even more spectacular has been the research carried out by Dr. Robert G. Heath, chief psychiatrist at Tulane University. He had found a substance in the blood of schizophrenics which he had found nowhere else. From a pint of blood taken from schizophrenics, Dr. Heath was able to extract about a tenth of a teaspoonful of the substance, which is believed to be a protein enzyme.

With this substance, the chemical nature of which is still not known, Dr. Heath and his associates performed a series of amazing experiments. They injected this substance into monkeys. After the injection the monkeys "developed a full-blown catatonic picture with waxy flexibility, looked dazed and out of contact, and would stare into distant corners of the room gesticulating and grimacing inappropriately so as to suggest that they might be hallucinating." Brain wave recordings taken of these monkeys were practically identical with those of severe schizophrenics.

The next step taken by Dr. Heath was to try this blood extract on human beings. Two volunteers were found in the Louisiana State Penitentiary who were mentally normal in every way. They were given an injection of the blood extract, and within five minutes they showed mental symptoms, which reached a peak after about half an hour. Although the same substance was used in both persons, one developed a classical paranoid schizophrenic picture with ideas of reference, persecutory delusions, and auditory hallucinations; whereas the other developed a picture of catatonic schizophrenia with blocking of thoughts and speech, and retardation of physical activity.

All symptoms completely disappeared within two hours. Neither man developed any changes in the nervous system, and the men have been normal since the experiment. Dr. Heath's report on only two human cases was preliminary, and there is still a great deal of research to be done.

The exploration of the properties of psychotic blood was undertaken in another interesting direction by Dr. Nicholas Bercel, a research psychiatrist associated with the University of Southern California. Dr. Bercel was interested in ascertaining what effect blood serum taken from schizophrenics would have on spiders. He collected seventy spiders (*Zilla x-notata*), kept them in an air-conditioned room, and took meticulous care of them. The spiders were obviously in a good frame of mind for they spun beautiful and symmetrical webs. Their web-spinning skill was to furnish the clue to the behavior.

The spiders were fed flies and continued to spin well-proportioned and precisely geometric webs. Then Dr. Bercel took certain flies, drained out their normally constituted blood and replaced it with the blood taken from schizophrenic patients. The spiders sucked out the schizophrenic blood from the dead flies. At this point Dr. Bercel was prepared to observe how the spiders behaved. He destroyed the webs, in order to force the spiders to build new webs.

The results were most interesting. The spiders who fed on the schizophrenic blood became schizophrenic too. If the blood came from a catatonic, the spiders became catatonic. They moved about in a listless manner, and they spent a great deal of their time doing nothing. They no longer spun beautifully geometric webs. Their webs were now disordered and haphazard, with no sense of design and purpose. Other types of schizophrenic blood produced effects on the webs that were not so obvious.

The chemical study of the blood of schizophrenics is now being carried out by a number of investigators. Dr. Heath has isolated a globulin from the blood by precipitating the serum proteins with salts at various pH levels, followed by dialysis. At pH 6.2 the serum precipitated from schizophrenics "appeared distinctly different from the precipitate from normal serum."

Dr. Heath and his associate feel that the fraction isolated from the blood of schizophrenics is apparently qualitatively different in most of its essentials from that of normal individuals.

Mrs. A. Hoffer and H. Osmond have demonstrated that the urine and blood of schizophrenics are different from that of non-schizophrenics. Their studies have shown that schizophrenic

blood is markedly toxic for L-strain fibroblasts when added to the culture. Normal blood is non-toxic. In addition, it has been found that wool will absorb quantitatively more material from schizophrenic urine than from normal urine. Some of the absorbed substance is that most interesting substance, indole.

These studies seem to show that mental disease is due, in great measure, to chemical changes in the blood. Dr. Heath has declared that he is now working on a specific treatment for mental disease consisting of "the administration of enzymes and specific tissue extracts." Thus, a new era in the treatment of mental illness is now being initiated.

The chemical unravelling of the mysteries of mental illness is just beginning. Dr. Chauncey Leake, well-known pharmacologist, states:

Fascinating hypotheses regarding the etiology of mental disorders are developing as a result of consideration of the chemistry and pharmacology of drugs related to non-adrenalin, 5-hydro-oxytryptamine, and alkaloids containing the indole nucleus. With coordinated effort on a large scale between chemists, pharmacologists, and clinicians, it may be possible, with chemical agents now available, to make a "break-through" in our ignorance regarding the etiology of mental disturbance.

If you don't go out the way you came in

HOLLIS SUMMERS

Walter Hoyton, Bloomington, Indiana, had been late for the first session of the Association of American and English Scholars meeting in New Orleans, Louisiana. He was late because he had stopped at the hotel bar and ordered three Manhattans, one right after the other. "It was an unscholarly thing to do," Professor Hoyton said to himself, even while he was drinking, already forgetting that he was disappointed not to find somebody he knew in the bar. "But I felt I needed strength to face my fellows," he said, as he burst the second cherry against his upper partial plate. And he said, "Keats," to himself. He could not recall the direct quote about bursting the grape, although he knew the words as well as he knew his own name: Dr. Walter Hoyton, Bloomington's only representative to the A.A.E.S. He felt beautifully detached from Indiana and the pettiness of an academic world.

"It was an unscholarly thing to do—*three* of them," he would say, and Ruth would smile efficiently at him over her needlepoint, and the people from upstairs, or the graduate students—whoever was in for the evening—would begin to laugh before the story was under way. Somebody—one of the girls—would say, "Nobody tells stories better than Dr. Hoyton," and somebody else, gently moving a bottle of beer to stretch himself full length on the serape by the hi-fi, would comment on the fact that fabulous experiences were always happening to Dr. Walter Hoyton.

But the lecture was far from a fabulous experience. Dr. T. A. F. Hamilton was reading his usual paper on Melville when Walter arrived at the dingy auditorium. "So this is where I'm to spend the next two and a half days, I said to myself," Walter said to himself as he slipped into the next to last row. He had thought the row was empty. "Excuse me," he said to the man whose legs he bumped.

The man rose to let him pass. "Pardon *me*," the man said. His voice was very deep and quite Southern.

Walter smiled. He could never get over the feeling that a Southern accent was mere play acting. "Tell them about the convention, Walter," Ruth would say. Surely she would encourage him to talk about the convention. "Having been born in Vermont of God fearing people with a very clipped speech . . ." Walter thought. He wished Ruth had come with him.

The ride in the taxicab out to the university had been quite soothing—romantic, even, and soothing. "There I was riding through the soft tropical rain, and I thought of you people freezing at home. I thought about Ruth being excited over the first crocus." Ruth would have come with him if she hadn't been consumed with the League of Women Voters' campaign. It would have been nice if she had decided at the last minute to get on the train. He wished Ruth had said, "To hell with the god damned League." Ruth cursed prettily. She was always shocking the young students; it was good for the kids to be shocked out of their Bible Belt complacency by people like the Hoytons. "Mrs. Hoyton, oh my goodness," one of the young girls would say, the color rising in her young Bible Belt face.

But Ruth had a sense of responsibility. It was impossible to imagine her hopping on a train in the middle of the night. The Hoytons were responsible people. (Ruth could say, "Tell them about that god damned convention, Walter.") Even though Dr. T. A. F. Hamilton was being duller than his usual norm, one could sit in the dingy little auditorium in New Orleans, Louisiana, and experience a sense of well-being, of completion almost. A convention delegate had a responsibility to his convention. It was a sad commentary on the state of academic responsibility that only the first dozen rows of the auditorium were filled. Walter shook his head. "A sad commentary."

He ran his hand down the back of his head. His close-clipped hair was as thick as a rug. Almost every man in the first twelve rows was bald or balding. Some of them had even plastered long long gray wisps over their center nakedness. They listened as intently as did the Southerner three seats away. They listened as if T. A. F. Hamilton had good sense. And after the lecture they would mount the steps to compliment the old man, hoping he would publish their little articles in his god damned *Journal*.

Those who had brought their wives would drag them up to the stage to say, "My husband admires your work so much."

Walter knew what the scattering of women would look like even before they turned their heads in their ugly hats. Most faculty wives had outsized faces—"quadruple C or triple D," Ruth said. Ruth's face was a beautiful size. Ruth framed her beautiful face with expensive hats. Ruth wouldn't suck up to old Hamilton. Ruth said, "If he doesn't want to publish your Faulkner paper, to hell with him. What's publishing? You're a teacher not an author. Who does that son of a bitch think he is?"

Walter Hoyton covered his mouth with his hand, glancing again at the Southerner. It was not fair of the Manhattans to lie heavily on his stomach, not when everything was so pleasant. But the Southerner would not have turned his head if somebody had belched through a megaphone. The Southerner was leaning forward in order not to miss one word of Hamilton's crap. He wore rimless glasses and a black suit and his hair was very thin in front. But the hair was cut short—you could say that for him. Walter wished the Southerner had brought his wife along. She would have a triple D face, and her hat would be bargain basement three years ago.

"The scholars may be scholars," Walter's voice would say to the guests who smiled within the charcoal and oyster walls of Bloomington. "They may be scholars, but they're not gentlemen." He would run his hand over the carpet of his hair. "And there I was, a non-conventional man in the midst of a convention."

"Oh, Dr. Hoyton!"

"But even this would pass away, I thought, even this." Walter chuckled. He would chuckle when he told the story at home. "Even this."

And, blessedly, Dr. T. A. F. Hamilton's paper did pass away. The old man was at last massaging his manuscript and bobbing his round head awkwardly at the audience. He turned his great body from right to left, as if he stood in a shower stall, bathing in the applause.

The Southerner was making a great deal of noise with his large hands. Walter decided that the man taught in a small denominational college in some place like Alabama. Dr. Hoyton tapped

his hands together three times, gently. He took his hat from the seat beside him, even though a rather brilliant question on the relationship of Faulkner and Melville sprang to his mind. Perhaps it was the soft spring night that waited outside, or his touch of indigestion, or the embarrassing intensity of the man beside him, but he was determined to leave. He would stand in the quiet rain and whistle for a cab; he would drop in at one of the publishers' parties for a couple of quick ones; and he would write a note to Ruth to let her know he had arrived safely.

"And now if there are any questions?" Dr. Hamilton still clutched his manuscript.

"I have found in my own study of Melville," Johnson of U. T. began, licking carefully at each word. Sometimes it was difficult to love one's fellows.

Walter Hoyton uncrossed his legs.

He should have gone out the far end of the aisle, of course. "If you don't go out the way you came in, you'll have bad luck," his mother always said—thirty years ago she said it. Her bland face frowned as seriously over one superstition as another. "Everything was a religion with my mother," Walter thought as he crouched to slip out. It was not a very quotable quote, and he had no notion why he remembered his mother's foolish face. "Excuse me," he said to the Southerner.

"You're leaving?" the man whispered, rising slowly. He was tall. And his glasses . . . The glasses were not facsimiles of the glasses which Rev. Hoyton wore in Vermont, the better to see the terror on his congregation's face. But foolishly, god damned foolishly, Walter remembered his father's glasses. "You're leaving before the questions and answers?" the man's voice was so resonant, even in a whisper, that the whole congregation could have heard him.

"If you'll excuse me," Walter said. It was quite laughable, and he wondered what he would do if the man refused to allow him to leave. For a moment of comic panic, Walter thought of breaking into a cough. On occasion he had left his father's church with a feigned coughing fit in order to walk around the white building and look intently at the blue Vermont sky.

"I'll go with you," the man was saying, and his breath was

sweet, and he was following Walter into the lobby of the building, smiling down at him.

"You aren't a scholar," the man was saying. It was a question, of course. "You aren't a scholar?"

"As a matter of fact, I am. I am a delegate to the sessions. I attend several of these meetings every year." Walter ran his tongue over his lips. There was no reason under God's heaven to be explaining to the man. "I am a scholar, but I'm leaving."

"That fellow in there. He's really an authority?" It was another question. Walter was sure it was another question.

"He's an authority." Walter pushed gently past the man toward the great double doors which led to the street.

"And you like the school business?" The man spoke tentatively now.

"Very much." Dr. Walter Hoyton smiled and nodded. "Very, very much."

"That's what I wanted to know." The man was smiling, too.

Walter did not mean to be unkind. He started to ask, "Don't you like teaching?" But Walter was not inquisitive, save in a scholarly sense. He loathed people who asked questions, personal or otherwise; it was part of his considerate nature. Ruth always said, "You're too considerate, Walter. You're too considerate for your own good."

So, Walter Hoyton waved his hand for the Southerner to precede him into the soft night. "It's a good life," he said quite naturally.

"There I was, looking in the face of this great Saint Bernard," Walter said to himself. He couldn't remember when he had considered his own height. Ruth Hoyton was four inches shorter than her husband. If she had wanted to leave the Saint Bernard, she would merely have said, "More over, you ugly bastard," and walked away.

But the man, for all his bulk, was really rather shy. Teetering on the top step he spoke almost apologetically. "The reason why I asked you about that fellow . . . Well, I read *Moby Dick* last week. I don't mean to be critical, but it didn't seem like the man was much talking about the same book I read. If you know what I mean. I thought what he said was good, all right."

Walter laughed quite genuinely. He started to say, "I know what you mean." If he were positive the man was a teacher, he would have agreed. But he wasn't quite positive, and one didn't go around criticizing one's profession. He thought of saying, "Well, goodnight," and a cab would come along that very moment, splattering through the wet night.

The rain had stopped. The air was cool. Walter did not know why he had considered the night tropical. He hadn't met the Southerner, so it would be ridiculous to say, "It's nice to have met you."

"I'm Dr. Walter Hoyton, University of Indiana," Walter extended his hand.

"I'm Edwin Tate." The man's clasp was powerful. He pumped one's hand almost as if . . . "as if the physical world could substitute for the intellectual," Walter thought, without quite knowing what his mind meant by the words. Of course he would not allow himself to rub his hand, "to rub back circulation," and then his mind said, "civilization," and he smiled broadly at Edwin Tate.

"I'd be pleased if you'd let me take you where you're going."

"As a matter of fact . . ." But no taxi was in sight, and he certainly did not want his fellows of the A.A.E.S. to find him awkwardly whistling in the deserted street, not when he'd left before the questions.

"I know you're busy," Edwin Tate said.

"As a matter of fact, I'd appreciate a lift." The word *lift* was not Walter's word. "There I was, taking words from another drawer of vocabulary. The man was powerful, I tell you, real powerful personality, as we say in New Orleans."

Walter matched his steps to the man's long stride. It was simple to keep in step, and, obviously, the man was embarrassed now over his presumption. Edwin Tate said it was cool, and Walter said it was very pleasant, and they were under a street light beside a black Chevrolet. "I've been looking forward to the speech tonight," Edwin Tate said, unlocking the door on Walter's side.

"I was just going to ask if you'd like to drop in on one of the publishers' parties. We can meet everybody, and the liquor's good." Walter felt sure the man was a teacher, but he wondered,

suddenly, if they drank at small denominational colleges in Alabama. "They can be pretty dull, of course, but generally . . ." He did not stop smiling, even though it was difficult to imagine Edwin Tate in the smoky hotel suite beside the publisher's representative. The representative would be in his shirt sleeves; he would say, "I used to teach school myself," and he would urge Edwin to take off his coat. But Edwin Tate looked as if he had been born with his coat on. And his glasses—those god damned, old fashioned glasses.

"That's very nice of you." The door was finally opened. Edwin Tate stood back, the light bright on those funny glasses.

"Maybe you aren't interested . . ." Walter began, but the man was already going around to the other side. The representative would tell the first joke, followed by the hierarchy—professors on down, increasingly specific of man's bodily function. A joke about making love on an ironing-board would sound very vulgar in the non-academic voice of Edwin Tate.

Mr. Tate closed his door gently.

"It's just a party, and there are a number of them." Walter was not apologizing. It was only that Edwin Tate made no effort to start the motor. "Like a bump on a log," Walter's mother would have said.

"Maybe the professors remember that night in New Orleans when they make out their book-store requisitions—that's all, no commitment." Walter realized that he spoke as if he himself belonged to another profession and New Orleans were a thousand miles away.

"It's all right." Edwin Tate finally lowered his blinking eyes. Perhaps he even shrugged. And then he said, quite swiftly, "I'm a preacher. It's what I wanted to talk about. I'd appreciate a lot talking about it."

Automatically—it was completely automatic—Walter said, "I'm sorry."

Rev. Tate said, "I think I'm sorry, too."

They were laughing, actually laughing into each other's faces. "It was macabre, I tell you, the two of us laughing at each other. Not *at. With*. I'm sure *with* is the word."

"I'm thinking about giving up the ministry. That's why I came

tonight. I read in the paper where you were having this meeting. I wanted to see what a bunch of teachers were like." Rev. Tate was not laughing any more. He had started the motor, the black car had already moved far away from the street light. "I figure a man ought to be in the place he fits best. You've only got so long. I've been preaching since I was seventeen—I never knew anything else."

"I have respect for the ministry," Walter said. You had to say something.

Walter said, "My father was a Methodist preacher—up in Vermont." He could not remember when he had mentioned his father, even to a friend. It was the glasses—those god damned glasses. "I was reared in a preacher's household."

"Then you know what I mean." Walter Hoyton couldn't have pleased Edwin Tate more. The man was smiling all over himself, as if he'd found his twin egg. "You know exactly what I mean."

"It's a hard life," Walter said. "The pettiness." He was glad he had made the man happy; but he was uncomfortable. He was cold, too. It was the cold more than anything that bothered him. He held his teeth tightly together for fear they would chatter. The streets of New Orleans were as strange as the streets of a dream, and he remembered the bright nights of Vermont.

But they were on their way down town, all right, and there was nothing to worry about. In front of them the sky was very pink.

"This segregation business."

"It's good to hear a Southerner speak up."

"And this pettiness—like you say. Always the pettiness. The tea towels in the church kitchen, for instance." Rev. Tate drove very swiftly, but he drove well. "Martha and I have talked about it a lot. She's willing to go along with whatever I decide."

"Yes, yes," Walter said, clearing his throat. There was no need to answer the man; there was no need to listen to him. The black Chevrolet was a Protestant confessional booth. When the priest confessed to the laymen, every man was indeed an island. And across town the publisher's representative began the discussion of the relative merits of Scotch and Bourbon, and old Hamilton placed his manuscript in his brief-case, while Ruth said good-night to the brittle matrons of her League.

"There's an elder in my church, for instance . . ."

Father Hoyton. Walter wanted to laugh in the dark booth.

"No, Walter," Ruth would say. "You're making this up."

"The things that happen to Dr. Hoyton!" The Bible Belt face would move closer to the sleek mahogany chair—they'd bought the chair in Mexico, eight hundred pesos, and there wasn't another like it in all the Bible Belt.

"Like I said, you've only got so long. Martha and I, we're almost thirty years old, both of us. The way I figure . . ."

Edwin Tate was lying. No one, absolutely no one, would believe that Walter Hoyton was a decade older than the man beside him. The ironing-board joke would have been no more shocking on the minister's lips.

When they were thirty . . . They had already bought the brown china and the dining room furniture. He would like to tell Edwin Tate about the dining room. It was unfortunate that the confessor was uninterested in the state of his priest's bowels.

"You said it was a good life—that's what you said back there in the lobby. I wish you'd talk to Martha."

Rev. Tate had pulled the black Chevrolet to the curb. His face in the dashlights was as eager as a child's. His face was very young in the half light. "I know it's asking a lot, but I wish you'd talk to her. Just tell her what you told me."

"What did I tell you?" Walter's lips were dry again. "As dry as chips," his mother would have said.

"About the good life—you know. Meetings like this. You know."

"I'd be glad to," Walter said, for what else could a person say, and there was no room in the small booth for turning your mind around and around and around.

Rev. Tate turned the car in a U so swiftly that the tires wailed. "Like a banshee," Walter's mother would have said.

Rev. Tate said, "It's funny about people. I knew you were somebody I could get along with. People talk about coincidence. I don't mean to sound like a preacher, but I don't call it coincidence. I think it's providence."

"You are very kind," Walter said, which was a god damned stupid thing to say.

"When you slipped in that row tonight, all humped over Look, I'm not much for formality. I want you to call me Ed. You don't know how sick a person gets of Brother and Reverend all the time."

"Of course . . . Ed."

"I've been calling you Walt to myself—all of the time we've been talking. A member of my last church was named Walt—Chairman of the Board. Finest kind of fellow. You know, sometimes I think . . ."

Walter Hoyton wouldn't have minded talking to Martha Tate under any other circumstances. But one needed time to prepare a lecture. If there had been time, he would have worked out a really impressive *Apologia. Assertion. Assertion* was the word. He could make an essay of it, sophisticated but warm underneath, something for *The Atlantic* or *Harper's*. It would be infinitely more important to have a piece in *Harper's* than to appear every month in Hamilton's *Journal*, the son of a bitch.

But Ed Tate cheated, and there wasn't time to work out even an introduction. Perhaps they had been headed for the parsonage all the time. "Kidnapped," Walter Hoyton thought. The word "kidnapped" stood alone in his mind, undecorated by modifiers because the preacher didn't give you time to think.

"Walt, I can't tell you how much I appreciate this," the man said, opening the car door.

"Honey, this is Walt Hoyton. He's a professor at Indiana University," Ed Tate said, closing the door of the parsonage behind them.

Martha Tate had a tea towel in her hand. She wiped it against the underside of her right arm, and she extended her hand. "I'm finishing up dishes, isn't that terrible? Ten o'clock at night and I'm just finishing up. Ed, I had a terrible time getting the children to quiet down. Frank was just awful. He kept teasing the big boys."

"How do you do," Walter Hoyton said to Martha Tate who was tall and blonde. And beautiful. She was beautiful in spite of her pale lips and her hair pulled back in a skinny knot. Her skin was ridiculously young. He was particularly conscious of her smooth skin stretched over her thin face. "I didn't know you had

children," he said, like some stupid bastard in a bad play, feeding lines for the sake of exposition.

"Don't tell me I didn't mention the kids," the hero said.

"Ed's always talking about the boys. I keep telling him he talks too much about them," the heroine said. "He's always using them for illustrations in a sermon."

"Three boys. Three limbs of Satan." Ed Tate, smiling like a cartoon figure, placed his arm around his wife's shoulders. "Honey, we've been talking like sixty. There wasn't time to get it all said. Walt's father was a preacher. He knows all about preachers and teachers."

"My wife and I have no children," Walter said quickly.

"Oh," Martha Tate frowned. And then she said, "What are we standing here for?"

Ruth would laugh at Martha Tate's pitying "Oh." Ruth always said that mothers could not bear the thought of non-mothers. "If they didn't pity us, they'd go mad," Ruth told the graduate students. Walter Hoyton could hear his wife's laughter even in a New Orleans parsonage where "The Last Supper" hung over the mantel and the overstuffed furniture sagged beneath its flowered cretonne covers. "All the furniture suffered from double hernia," Ruth would say, and Ruth and the graduate students would laugh again.

Ed said they ought to have something to eat. Martha said she still hadn't got around to icing the cake—the icing was ready, but the children had been just terrible. And the kitchen was a mess. Ed said Walt knew what a preacher's house was like. "Walt knows about us," Ed said.

Ed Tate removed his jacket before he sat down at the oilcloth covered table in the center of the kitchen. "Sure you don't want to take yours off?" he asked as if he were a publisher's representative in a hotel suite.

"I'm very comfortable."

"It's right nippy out, isn't it?" Martha said.

Ed Tate told his wife about the evening while she moved softly over the worn linoleum—from refrigerator to sink to sideboard. (They actually had a sideboard. Actually, a sideboard in the kitchen.) "Walt says teaching is a good life."

Walter Hoyton cleared his throat.

"This is just a mix." Martha began to swirl chocolate icing over the white cake. She worked with a sharp butcher knife—no spatula for Martha Tate—but she worked professionally. "The cake is just a mix, I mean, I always keep a couple of boxes on hand, in case I get too rushed. But I don't think they're quite as good. The boys will eat anything, though."

"They take after their Daddy." Ed Tate smiled stupidly at his stupid wife. "I wish you could see those boys eat."

"See? See what I mean?" Martha asked.

Then there was talk of Fred and Fred's cough.

Walter Hoyton was angry. The anger rushed through his body like blood to a wound from a sharp knife. "Do you want your husband to leave the ministry?" The anger made his voice tremble.

"Whatever he thinks is right, I keep telling him. The boys will be in school next year, and I can work, part-time anyhow. Ed's determined to get a Ph.D. if he teaches. He wants to do it up right." The icing moved like lava, or like blood.

"But how do *you* feel about it?" Walter Hoyton was determined to make the stupid woman answer him. He spoke more loudly than he intended, but you had to speak loudly to a woman who turned to take cheap flowered plates from the dish drainer, who cut a fat cake with quick sharp strokes. It was important to force her into a statement. Ruth would certainly ask what the stupid woman *really* thought about the whole deal.

"Ed thought he was called to be a preacher but maybe he misunderstood the voice," she said, as if she were answering the question. "I think you can do just as much good in teaching as any place. More maybe, if you're not happy being a preacher. And Ed's right—we have a lot of intolerance in the church."

Ed Tate nodded at his wife's words, as if she were wise or clever.

"There are intolerances everywhere." Walter spoke carefully over his anger. He would say in the article for *Harper's* that naturally one found pettiness and intolerances everywhere, but he would make the words sparkle for *Harper's*. It was sufficient here, now, to line up the old arguments.

"We could go north, of course," Martha said to her piece of

cake. "They even have Negroes in their churches up there."

"But the winters are cold," Ed said.

"That's true." She smiled at her husband.

"There are enough good things to make up for the pettiness. Time, for instance. You have time to enjoy life." He was almost shouting. "You have time." He was speaking the truth. Walter Hoyton had time to enjoy life, despite the committees, and the papers, and the god damned freshmen. "There are lectures and concerts . . ."

"Ed doesn't like concerts."

"I don't have any music in me," Rev. Tate said as if he had received a compliment.

"I don't miss going. I play the piano enough for prayer meeting—that much. But we have a radio." She nodded toward the living room.

They are always nodding, the both of them, at each other, at the cake, at the guest they had dragged through the dark wet night. They nodded and smiled as they distracted themselves: Estelle had called about prayer-meeting; the bulletin copy was due the next day; Martha had been trying to get Jackie all evening to ask about the Missionary program.

"The human spirit," Walter Hoyton said finally. Finally he said it, "The human spirit."

"That's right," Ed said, his mouth full of cake.

"A teacher is concerned with the human spirit!"

"Everything is, I guess, for people like us." Martha nodded and smiled as if to show Walt he was included with people like the Tates.

"A teacher is . . ." Dr. Walter Hoyton pressed his hands hard against the edge of the table. If he pressed a little harder he could turn the table over, the cake, and the flowered plates. They should have had something to drink—coffee, or water, or something. The overturned table would be more comic in a New Orleans parsonage if there had been liquid to mix with the bloody cake. It was ridiculous not to have had anything to drink.

"We could sit here the rest of our lives giving reasons—for anything," Walter said quietly. But he did not loosen his hold on

the table. "If you don't go out the way you came in, you'll have bad luck."

They were listening now. The stupid god damned people were listening and they didn't know what he meant. Martha Tate said, "I don't know what you mean."

"I guess I mean you don't want to be a teacher." Walter made his hands let go of the table. He moved his hands carefully, as if he tore off bandages.

"It's something we have to consider from all sides," Martha said.

"Your children. The degree—the degree is a long row." But it was foolish to bother speaking to the people beside him.

"Won't you have another piece of cake?" Martha asked. "I mean, a piece of cake. Ed's always getting after me for saying 'another piece.' I can't seem to remember."

"Thanks a lot, but no. It was very good."

"You aren't leaving?" Rev. Tate was stifling a yawn. Warmed and filled and empty of mind, the son of a bitch was ready for bed.

Walter stood up gracefully from the uncomfortable kitchen chair. He did not brace his hands on the table as did both the Tates.

"We certainly appreciate your little visit," Rev. Tate said, following Dr. Hoyton into the living room.

"We certainly do," his wife said.

"I'll take you back to your hotel."

"No need. I can get a cab or a bus." Walter smiled up at Rev. Tate. "Unless you'll accompany me to the drunken party?"

"I guess not tonight." Rev. Tate was chuckling. He did not seem offended at the thought of a drunken party.

"Lots of dirty jokes," Walter said, looking straight into the rimless glasses of the preacher.

"Honestly!" Martha Tate said. She was laughing and nodding at the door while her husband pointed to where the bus stopped.

"Honestly!" Martha Tate had said, just as they all would say when he told the story at home.

He certainly would tell the story. For a moment, there at the kitchen table, he had failed to realize what a really fabulous story it would make. For a moment he had thought, he had actually

thought, that he would never tell the story to anyone, Ruth or anyone.

"And he let you take the bus back?" someone, moving still closer to the mahogany chair, would ask.

"He did."

"And you really talked a preacher into staying in the ministry?"

"I did. I did, before God."

"Honestly, Dr. Hoyton!"

And Ruth, the lines in her small face showing through the make-up, her hair splotted with dye under the severely modern floor lamp, would sound her god damned tense laugh above the laughter of the others.

FROM ONE (QUARTERLY) POET TO ANOTHER

By L. W. MICHAELSON

I've seen your name, and you've seen mine
In a patch of "little" mags; in fine,
Our voices squeak down academic halls,
And what we've had to say of woe,
Of shallow love or bacchanal,
Has put our eyes alone in thrall.

Our mermaid poems, then, each to each
they call;
But sometimes, just for spite,
I sense you've ignored my widow's mite;
My ragged verse, my sighs and rage,
Lie stillborn on the silent page.

So in our leaden craft and small-read art,
I'll faithfully scan what you impart
(Cross my lonely heart and hope to die);
For *noblesse oblige*, I cry.
And in my book I'll trace your name—
may you trace mine!
Mayhaps that's all we'll ever know of fame.

POINT OF TANGENCY

By ISABEL WILLIAMS VERRY

Columbus
disciple of circles
I think of you

as we turn eastward
over plains in siesta

Far back
the cloud bubbles
barnum and bailey
behind the Continental Divide

Now the great down-blossoming pear tree
the ming-blue and white-jade pagoda
the island in the sky

A little ahead
the traveled diameter
rouses languidly
to blink at circumference
before it is severed

As we too shall step off
any minute
any minute

The doomed wilderness

RICHARD NICKSON

"Man, wherever he goes, encounters only himself." So states Hannah Arendt, who in describing this situation in her book, *The Human Condition*, uses a word that is certain to become a fad word to rival *archetype* and perhaps even *symbol*. Dr. Arendt speaks of *alienation*, especially world alienation. As she sees it, world alienation has been "the hallmark of the modern age." To the world-alienated "all the processes of the earth and the universe have revealed themselves either as man-made or potentially man-made": they, the alienated, become "a society of men who, without a common world which could at once relate and separate them, live either in desperate lonely separation or are pressed together into a mass."

Now, as often as not, in any discussion of American culture, at least one voice will be heard affirming that this common world which alienated men have lost can be or is supplied by regionalism. This voice will undoubtedly go on to speak of the region still held by many to be the most regional: the South. And the chances are good that The Modern Literary Form, the novel, will then be referred to—and, in the same breath, The Modern Novelist, Faulkner. Someone may object that the New South is hardly the Old South—not even the Old South of Agrarian days; and another may hold that Southern novelists, Faulkner included, are now doing little more than repeating a manner, especially the Faulkner manner. Still, the regional question does get raised occasionally. As everybody knows, a sense of place is vital to art.

Nobody is likely to deny that a sense of place pervades the novels of William Faulkner. But the place that Faulkner celebrates is in the past, and the place that he elegizes is in the past. He sings different tunes altogether for the present. To be sure, whatever the time, whatever the tense, the place is emphatically there. But one place is the wilderness, the big woods; the other place is where we are—in the man-made world.

This Faulkner elegy could be extended to include the loss of more than the big woods. America in the twentieth century has lost or is losing so many of its distinctive features that when we speak of the region, we are probably talking about something that barely exists; we may be talking, along with Faulkner in "The Bear," about "that doomed wilderness whose edges were being constantly and punily gnawed at by men with plows and axes who feared it because it was wilderness, men myriad and nameless even to one another . . ."

But talk does not hinge on the existence of the thing being talked about. Nor need talk about the regional problem propose to grapple with a solution. After all, if a T. S. Eliot will attempt no solution of this problem (and he says that he will not), then surely it may be presumed quite, quite safely insoluble. Yet this has kept nobody, including Eliot, from having his say about it. In "Unity and Diversity: the Region," a chapter in his *Notes towards the Definition of Culture*, written shortly after the last war, Eliot offers this *prim* suggestion: "On the whole, it would appear to be for the best that the great majority of human beings should go on living in the place in which they were born." The legislative manner gradually subsides, however, at least in this one chapter. For Eliot allows that "the proper degree of unity and diversity cannot be determined for all people at all times." And the desideratum, he tells us, is "a common world culture, which will yet not diminish the particularity of the constituent parts." Like most of us, he favors alternatives to centralization. He extols loyalty to family and class; moreover, "it is important that a man should feel himself to be, not merely a citizen of a particular nation, but a citizen of a particular part of his country, with local loyalties." Eliot, however, while regarding a country which is too well united as a menace to others, calls that country within which diversity has gone too far a danger to itself.

Our traditionalist abroad does not, then, always sound like the arbiter of an exclusive country club. And it is interesting to find Allen Tate, one of our traditionalists in residence, speaking, in 1945, of at least one of his Agrarian essays as being "possibly a little stuffy" and "certain of itself." Tate, no longer a spokesman

for the Region Militant, duly observes, in "The New Provincialism," that nationalism is "not informed enough to support a mature literature" (any more than is its by-product, the "picturesque regionalism of local color"). Nevertheless, he does still advocate "local continuity in tradition and belief"; for "no literature," he says, "can be mature without the regional consciousness."

The Regional Debate is a fairly lively one to follow. Résumés of it, however, are apt to sound like only another Survey Course—in the manner of the *pros* and *contras* exhibited in Max Lerner's *America as a Civilization*. Oddly, considering the extent of the quarrel, there are perhaps no basic points raised throughout the history of the debate that were not touched on early in the century by the philosopher, Josiah Royce. Lerner makes no mention of Royce in his résumé; but Royce in his *Race Questions, Provincialism, and Other American Problems* (1908) sounded all the major themes. In effect, subsequent variations (Eliot's for instance) seem to employ merely some fresh data, a few different terms.

Royce recognized that "against the evil forms of provincialism we shall always have to contend. . . . False sectionalism, which disunites, will indeed always remain as great an evil as ever it was." But he was mainly concerned with what he calls "the leveling tendency . . . in modern civilization," which results from ease of communication, spread of popular communication, and consolidation and centralization of industries and of social authorities. "We tend," he warned, "all over the nation, and, in some degree, even throughout the civilized world . . . to approach a dead level of harassed mediocrity." Royce saw "the absolute necessity for our welfare, of a wholesome provincialism" (that is, *regionalism*), which, "like monogamy," he says, "is an essential basis of true civilization." "There ought to be"—he early intones the plaint—"some room left for variety."

The serious debaters, of course, whether arguing about regionalism or nationalism, never appreciably differ from the point of view expressed by Royce. Who, after all, is in favor of sameness? No: the debate most often centers about the degree of diversity—how much there actually is or how much is desirable. The

question of whether the leveling tendency has been increasing, for example, can only be answered in the affirmative. Yet the affirming voices somehow manage to differ widely.

Some thirty years and one world war after Royce's comment on the tendency, another philosopher—this time, an English one, on tour—was struck by "the extreme similarity of outlook in all parts of the United States." Bertrand Russell, in his *The Will to Doubt* (1935), found only what he calls "the old South" exceptional; but he found in all localities a desire to be exceptional, because "the greater the uniformity that in fact exists, the more eager becomes the search for differences that may mitigate it." Only in matters of thought and opinion, however, did he find (as he still finds!) the uniformity that he considers dangerous. And at that time he listed the schools, the churches, the press, the movies, and the radio as the principal sources of opinion.

Today, nearly another thirty years and another (hot and cold) world war later, America also has television—not to mention nuclear fission, discount stamps, rock 'n' roll, and tail fins; but we cannot point to any of these as exclusively American, save perhaps the fins. We have, in truth, considerably less particularity and diversity than ever before. Our old Melting Pot has been swapped for a brand new pressure cooker. Conformity, it seems, is very catching. For even though our fingerprints may still conveniently differ, our individual selves are fast growing indistinguishable in the national pod. We who a century ago flaunted the pirate flag of Emersonian laissez-faire individualism have had our tattered ensigns torn down and ourselves cast up on the ringing plains of a windy mass culture, where in either the Rockies or the Adirondacks we sweat out that multi-million dollar quiz question, or in the Dakotas or the Carolinas stare at identical silver screens with their wider and wider vistas of less and less. Our dime slipped in a slot in the Bowery bar spins the desired disc in the Pomona country club, and the very hamburger we munch in Maine comes wrapped in the same bit of cellophane Deep in the Heart of T.

Such leveling, such dehumanizing is felt by many commentators to be the almost world-wide manifestation of our technological civilization. Others cling to the notion that America has suc-

cumbed to the general malaise in a quite singular fashion, arguing, as it seems to me, that American pathology is to be distinguished from all other pathologies, the European included. The sociologist Lerner, for one, has recently been insisting that there is "an American civilization-pattern distinct from that of Western Europe." Although he takes pains, being no chauvinist, to decry "the distorted version of 'American exceptionalism,'" he yet finds "valid elements in the theory of exceptionalism." He even succeeds in using the concept of American "uniqueness" in a special way—a way that seems to spell out "more than" and "first with" rather than "different from." A recent trend among a few historians toward the "uniqueness" concept might be taken to accord with Lerner's views, were it not that Lerner expands the concept to accommodate regionalism. He not only regards American civilization as unlike any other; he emphasizes the contrasts within America, its "regions" and "subregions." For regionalism, so he tells us, is one of "the massive facts" about America. And he adds: "the regional culture . . . is a primary datum of American life."

These emphatic statements emerge from a fine network of qualifications. We learn that there is "a swift and striking erosion of regionalism taking place" as well as that "the regions are being fused into a national standardized pattern." But large concessions though these are, Lerner makes them, and others, while remaining a confirmed regionalist. He finds it possible to declare, for instance, that the region he calls the Southwest (he is talking about Texas, Oklahoma, New Mexico, Arizona, and Southern California) is "achieving a regional culture of its own, not yet clearly formed but in the making." It can even be seen—at least in the passage—that "individualism in the old freebooter sense has probably found its last foothold here." Perhaps Lerner had Los Alamos in mind. Perhaps also, regional concepts do prove useful to, among others, the social scientist. But how much of what purports to be descriptive of the region and the nation is simply cliché, hyperbole, or dream?

When D. H. Lawrence, the most remarkable artist who has settled for any time in this particular region, declared that "for *greatness* of beauty I have never experienced anything like New

Mexico," he was wryly conscious of the disparity between the magnificence of the country and the meanness of the encroaching civilization. And the thirty years that have passed since his death, with their steady accumulation of meannesses, have made the Southwest appear to be the region (excepting here and there an oasis) most soundly trounced by the hand of man—as by a tornado—or by the atlatl of an indignant red-skinned god. But of course, *no* region has been left unbuffeted.

Has the subregion been spared? One has but to visit Santa Fe to observe how the subregion of the Southwest (so listed by Lerner) has become only another stretch in the long, long trail a-winding from 42nd and Broadway to Vine and Hollywood, whether we call it Main Street or Madison Avenue. The residents of that city feel a sense of triumph in the battle against conformity whenever they succeed merely in setting up firebreaks in the path of the neon holocaust. They can take heart, too, from their continuing success in keeping their streets a bit narrower and crookeder than most, and in maintaining an unusual show of residential charm; nevertheless, between the idea and the reality falls the Shadow. If Penney's comes, can Sears be far behind? For camouflage the creeping mercantilism as it may, Santa Fe burns while hucksters fiddle. The small comfort left the inhabitants lies in the knowledge that their supermarkets come robed in the same would-be Hispano-Indian vestments as do their museums.

For the eclectic architecture of Santa Fe is enforced by legislation—a Williamsburg of the plains—as if to demonstrate how so very often the counteraction to a standardized kind of centralization can become as intolerable as the thing it would shun. Beyond doubt, pictures of the ragweeds of the Southwest, brochures about New England hearths, curio shops, and antiques satisfy certain human needs. Still, there is something hostile to humanity in persons who positively gloat over their snug little corners—especially whenever forthright pride in home and country gives way to regional snobbism.

The sentimentalizing of the past that facilitates the prostituting of the present is not exclusively characteristic of the Southwest; all the same, one does not have to be an out-and-out *santo-*

clast to wince at the preciosity of its "subregional" eclectic cultism, which encourages the vagaries of *viga* construction and the coterie commercialism that lauds as "Indian Art" every pretty bit of daubing turned out by an Indian to meet the standards not of his native culture but of the foreign, pale-faced consumer.

Nearly everybody may be inclined to look forward, or backward, with Lawrence, to the prospect of "many vivid small states, like a kaleidoscope, all colors, and all the differences given expression." Dissatisfaction being an occupational disease of his, the artist, especially—whether an angry young British man or his more docile American cousin—is apt to shudder at our one grey world, wherein the regions and the very states themselves are yielding place to the Organization. But despite his not being able to see what he would like to see, the artist will yet look at what is here—while the social scientist, with his concept-blinkers, goes on talking, pre-occupied, about what once-may-have-been part fact, part theory. Therefore, when singling out Santa Fe or any other corner of the country to remark a common bleaching in regional coloration, one must expect to be controverted. There is always someone around every corner to point admiringly at the Emperor's new clothes.

Not everything is black, perhaps not yet altogether grey. But surely the regions of America, from sea to shining sea, have been mined to the point of depletion. What is more, there is no longer a possibility of a new one turning up. The frontier has vanished along with the Mohicans. It has been not only settled, but made into a musical comedy, like as not, by that nice Mr. Rodgerstein. Or is serving to advertise a narcotic or nicotine product in the latest Luce leaflet. Thus *Homo Americanus*, his landscape tamed and his bronco busted, fixes his attention more and more on what Hopkins called his inscape. With no frontier left to explore and exploit (outer space being, for the moment, out of the question), he is driven to seeking a Wild West within his own Unconscious, hot in pursuit of his own Billy the Id.

America's supreme Regional Art—the New Orleans brand—was the shout heard round the world. It is now about as regional as hi-fi sets and a pair of horn-rimmed glasses bent over a bongo drum. Who today can point and exclaim, "Here is a regional

center"? A few painters, a few poets and jazz musicians have recently been pointing to themselves and talking about the "San Francisco scene"; but most of them are, or were, transient visitors to San Francisco; their work seems even less concerned with that city and region than they themselves are; and the one of their number most deserving the name of artist jumped to an early death from the Golden Gate Bridge.

Yet the artist is a prominent figure in the vanguard of intellectual opposition to the social forces tending to impose the "dead level of harassed mediocrity": the artist, that is, who can plainly be distinguished from the Whatever-Is-Is-Rightist as well as from the pander who addresses his fellow men as consumers—in short, the serious artist, the avant-gardist. Does he, this artist, facing our world of relativity, alienation, and anxiety, turn, in America, toward the region or in the direction of regional concepts? Plainly, as it seems, he does not. However interested he may be in expressing his particularity as an American, he turns in the direction taken by Western culture generally.

To assume for a moment that the avant-garde movement ever displays seamless ranks would be merely myopic. The ranks of the contemporary avant-garde are motley in the usual fashion. But a prominent trend or two may be remarked. Only the other day, in the *New Statesman*, an American poet, Donald Hall, offered a comparison of the "massive provincialism" of England, which "must reject all evidence of the European Mind," with American cosmopolitanism. America, Hall says,

is a country without a past; without parents, it has chosen to adopt the world. *Moby Dick* and *The Scarlet Letter*, no less than *The Ambassadors* and *The Waste Land*, are works of the international intelligence. . . . American authors have always borrowed from a variety of cultures; the American tradition is to scavenge among traditions.

Hall's opinion is lent additional weight by reason of its being a variation on themes that have been emphasized by several critics recently—notably Leslie Fiedler, who argues that the American novel is "only *finally* American." Its appearance, Fiedler says in the introduction to his *Love and Death in the American Novel*, is "an event in the history of the European spirit—as, indeed, is the

very invention of America itself." Support for Hall's twitting of the English comes from an English source. Lawrence Durrell, an India-born Irishman, was recently asked in an interview printed in *Encounter* whether "as an English novelist" he is not "always going to be writing at an angle to the English universe if you are not more or less constantly abroad?" The author of *The Alexandria Quartet* replied:

I think this is one of our cardinal errors, namely, to assume that art is a form of purely patriotic response to a given place. I think that is probably a reflection of our rather parochial attitude in refusing to admit that we are part of Europe. I personally would like to feel that I was an English-European.

Reflections on the modern novel made by another British novelist, Iris Murdoch, lend even less aid to the nationalist or regionalist. In a perceptive lecture given at Yale last year, Miss Murdoch said that the novel today tends toward two extremes:

either it is a tight metaphysical object . . . which attempts to convey, often in mythical form, some central truth about the human condition—or else it is a loose journalistic epic, documentary or possibly even didactic in inspiration, offering a commentary on current institutions or on some matter out of history.

To Miss Murdoch, it is the "metaphysical" novel that represents what is best and most influential in our literature—and in it "the hero is alone, with no company, or with only parts of himself for company." Extending her generalization further, Miss Murdoch sees modern literature presenting us with "the triumph of neurosis, the triumph of myth as a solipsistic form."

Surely this description does fit more than the literary form of the novelist. It can be applied to not only the novels of Samuel Beckett, but his plays as well; not to mention the plays—and the poems—of innumerable other writers, whether American or European. Perhaps this Neurosis Rampant on a Field of Self could fittingly serve today as coat of arms for all the arts. At any rate, the contemporary artist is far more likely to be concerned with the human condition than with a national or a regional condition, even though he may not invariably be found contemplat-

ing, in isolation, fragments of himself, or fragmentary projections of himself.

No one can confidently speak, say, of painting that is American. We do speak of a New York School of painting; but we know perfectly well, from a glance at the latest gallery catalogs from Europe, that the New York School has a far-flung extension division. Or perhaps André Malraux is right, and the Alma Mater is Paris. But the question of priority regarding the contribution of this city or that nation to painting which is so conspicuously international is, after all, neither answerable nor significant. What *is* significant about this painting, alongside its international character, is its abstractionism. If we are able to discover but a meager relationship of the protagonists to their surroundings in so many recent novels, in this "school" of painting—now well on the way to imposing an academism all its own—we find no relationship whatever, because there are neither protagonists nor surroundings. Here is non-regional art with a vengeance, with every artist resolved not to hold a canvas up to nature.

The solipsistic form spoken of by Miss Murdoch has its apotheosis in so-called Action Painting. Harold Rosenberg, who has so called it, says, in his book, *The Tradition of the New*, that an artist's psychic state or tension (the ultimate subject matter, he suggests, of all art) "may be represented either through the image of a thing or through an abstract sign. The innovation of Action Painting," according to Rosenberg, "was to dispense with the *representation* of the state in favor of enacting it in physical movement. The action on the canvas became its own representation." Non-representational paintings are, in any case, undeniably well represented. They have been briskly proliferating for a half century, until today our galleries are fairly bulging with them. The few masterworks aside, a flashy sort of nihilistic sameness is the prevailing mode, whether "activist" or all-out passive.

Isn't it refreshing to see attacks mounted against modernity? The question has been put by Paul Hindemith, who is scarcely a conservative composer. "For many, the grapes are sour—they rejoice," as he says, "at every blow that the 'neologists' receive. But should not the unswerving modernists," he asks, "now and then come to a realization that there is nothing more wearisome

or more barren than the most antiquated of all manias: the rage to be modern?" Hindemith, in the program notes for the 1954 recording of his *Das Marienleben*, warns against "an *Ars nova* which . . . has found its satisfaction in a search for externals." He fears that the *nova* is being put before the *Ars*.

Not all contemporary avant-garde art, of course, is so new, so extreme, as that mentioned by Murdoch and Rosenberg (whose remarks were in no way derogatory); and quite as clearly our *Ars nova* is by no means all of the sensationalist sort deplored by Hindemith. Moreover, sample of it where we will, we are likely to find pieces of our actual world, pieces of our very selves—pieces that we are no way able to fit together into a pattern at all resembling the diagram of the sociologist, the blueprint of the historian. Theory is always shade or mirage; the artist points—and there is light, even if only an eerie X-ray. Yet however faint and fractured, in it we can make out something of our lineaments, painful though that confrontation often is.

This is not to deny that there are still many practitioners in this country of a trade called Regional Art. They exist alongside the social scientists for whom the United States still embodies the most heterogeneous society in the world. They are, for the most part, the professional inspirationists and laborious touts who are not looking so much at life as at the market. But here I am trying to single out a few striking characteristics of genuine art.

Many of our works of art that many persons besides myself would call "genuine" must seem genuinely abhorrent to the true-born regionalist, who at the same time is markedly unable to detect anything abhorrent in our society, out of which our artists arise, and upon which our serious artists reflect. But before we can enjoy a more attractive sort of art, the chances are that we will have to make our society a bit more attractive. One of our host of presumptuous critics may fortunately be standing by at this very moment with a program, replete with platform, designed to solve this little quandary and to inaugurate the latest New Art.

Unfortunately, one of the more canny critics of America wrote before we had any significant art to be appraised. But although De Tocqueville could not speak as critic, he did speak—or so it has come to seem—as prophet:

I am persuaded that in the end democracy diverts the imagination from all that is external to man and fixes it on man. . . . poets living in democratic times will prefer the delineation of passions and ideas to that of persons and achievements.

De Tocqueville believed that "the chief, if not the sole theme, of poetry" will become "the destinies of mankind, man himself taken aloof from his country and his age . . ."

Man has indeed come to view himself, ever more widely and darkly, as alone, aloof, or—as Dr. Arendt would say—world alienated. We well may lament our loss, our many losses. Ah! wilderness.

Yet somebody has warned us: You can't go home again.
And anyway: that wilderness is doomed.

authors

(Continued from page 4)

Walks Near Athens, was brought out last year by Harper and Brothers.

L. W. MICHAELSON ("From one poet to another," poem, p. 83) teaches feature and technical writing at Colorado State University.

ISABEL WILLIAMS VERRY ("Point of tangency," poem, p. 84) teaches

creative writing at the high school in Abington, Pennsylvania.

RICHARD NICKSON ("The doomed wilderness," p. 85) teaches English at Paterson State College. His lyric poems, *Cyprian Songs*, as set by the composer, Benjamin Lees, will be premiered this summer in San Francisco by the Metropolitan Opera singer, Theodore Uppman. This song cycle will be published by Boosey and Hawkes, as was the Nickson-Lees cycle, *Songs of the Night*, in 1958.

